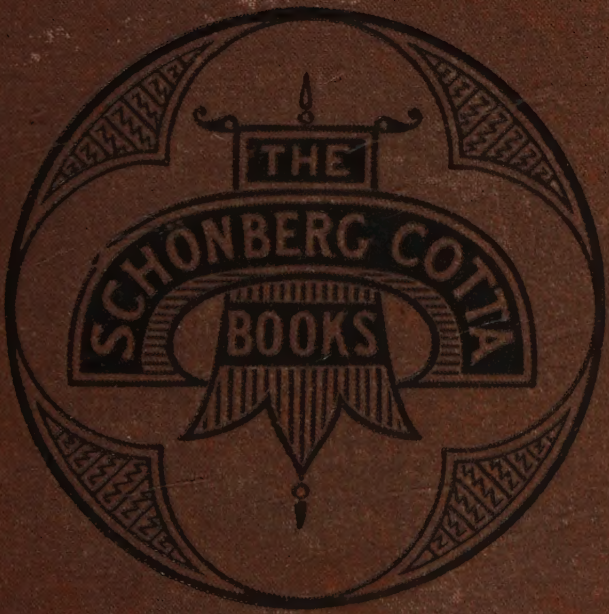
THE
SCHONBERG COTTA
BOOKS

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Presented by Mr. A. R. Buckley.

Cripple of Antioch.

THE

CRIPPLE OF ANTIOCH,

AND OTHER

SCENES

FROM

Christian Life in Early Times.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE CHRONICLES OF THE SCHÖNBERG COTTA FAMILY"

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PREFACE.

THE materials of these Sketches have been gathered from sources within general reach,—from English, French, and German histories and biographies, with (in some instances) translations of the older writers.

The third of the following Tales is by far the most broadly based on facts. The first contains little local or historical colouring. In the second, the outline is from history; but with the exception of "The False Christ," only one historical person—Bishop Judas of Jerusalem—is introduced, and in that case it is rather the name and position than the character which are historical. In the third, all the principal historical characters—Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, Paulinus of Nola, and Vigilantius—speak only what they have written or are reported to have spoken; but the character and not the chronology of their teaching has been attended to. The incident of the first

meeting between Macarius and Chrysostom is a fact; the description of Macarius' childhood is paraphrased from that of a contemporary; the character of Olympias is sketched in its outline from what is recorded of her.

The most perfect of our Church histories can be but imperfect copies of imperfect portraits—faint reflections of a broken ray; and the writer feels deeply how faint and broken is the reflection in these pages. May they only lead the reader, through and beyond all images and all veils to Him into whose transforming presence the spirits of the just men here spoken of have passed to be made perfect, in whose light alone we can see light, or in any measure shine so as to glorify Him.

THE CRIPPLE OF ANTIOCH.

CHAPTER I.

IT was a low, dull, joyless room,—not that there was no light in it; there were two windows. A girl sate embroidering by one of them. But the sunbeams seemed to understand they were wanted there, not for their own sake, but because there was no work to be done without them; and, therefore, though they conscientiously lighted up the room, they did not rest lovingly on anything in it. In the middle of the floor stood a charcoal brazier, and over it an old woman was bending, cooking to the music of her own grumblings, as she apostrophised severally the fish, the charcoal, and, through them, all fishermen and charcoal-burners, and the age in general.

"You were in the sea this morning, no doubt," said she to the fish, "or your master thought you were, poor innocent man! and you deceived him; you slipped into a corner, watched your younger brothers displayed to the ugly little wretch of a black cook at the great house over the way, and you took care never to make your

appearance till old Graia, the grumbler, came: anything was good enough for her. The poor cannot pay dear for the best, so they must pay dear for the worst; and so every one helps on their fellow-creature who is sinking. What fine charcoal, indeed!" she continued, in a mocking tone; "the best in all the forests around Antioch—'the very same we use for the sacrifices to the holy gods,' said our neighbour Pothinus, the priest—charitable man! And so, to please the gods, he sold this worthless trash, that has scarcely heat in it to roast a fly, to his good neighbour, Widow Graia, 'for almost nothing.' The gods reward him by roasting him in the lower regions with nothing hotter! Meanwhile, happy are those who cheat without being punished, and those who are cheated without finding it out, like the poor silly child yonder. Victoria!"

The girl turned at her name, and said, languidly, "Did you want me, grandmother?"

"No, no; I was only talking to myself. Why should I talk to a child like you? Nice company for one of my experience! Go on in your innocence, and toil to do your best for those barbarians in the palace over the way. Spend all your Greek art and intellect on them. When you have made a design worthy to ornament an altar, they will be sure to admire it; for is it not made of gold and silver thread, and what is so beautiful or so expensive as gold and silver?"

"Grandmother, you are unjust," said the girl; and a flush passed across her pale, sickly features. "The Lady Ione is as beautiful as day; and it is impossible but she must appreciate whatever is beautiful, because it is like herself. She must be very dear to the gods, for they have given her everything."

"The old story used to be, 'Those whom the gods love, die young,'" was the reply. "Perhaps she will not enjoy it long, and you and I may be still eating and drinking here when she is food for others: so it will be all fair in the end."

"Oh, grandmother, hush! that is no comfort; let her be happy. I try all my life not to envy her; do not make it harder by such bitter words. It is no wrong to us that the Lady Ione is joyous and beautiful; though sometimes, when I am very tired, and I see her pass by like a goddess in the sunshine, in the robes which cost me so many head-aches, it seems as if it were; but much more when her little children press into the doorway to watch her come back, and have the first kiss. To have so much love! and yet I cannot help giving her mine."

"Well, as you please," was the reply; "let her enjoy her splendour. For my part, I do not see what comfort is left to the poor and unhappy, but a little hearty hatred. Let that pass. I was thinking of your name. It was not altogether prophetic. There was some victory over

I forget whom—victor and vanquished are the same to me—celebrated on the day of your birth; and your father and mother, foolish young people as they were, chose to consider you as in some way connected with the rejoicings. It often makes me laugh when I hear the sublime word echoing through this dingy street. Victoria stitching for a few pence—Victoria cooking old fish—Victoria sick and lame! You and your name are like comedians at the theatre, making a perpetual side-play of jests on one another."

The girl threw the embroidery from her, and hid her face in her hands, weeping passionately.

"Oh, leave me that," she sobbed; "it is the only bright thing about me; it makes me feel I was welcome once, and a joy to some one. When I am very sad, it makes me shed the only tears I ever weep that are not bitter; and when I am better, when the sun shines, and I am a little stronger than usual, and can creep out and sit in the sunshine, I think, Who knows but after all it may be a prophecy!"

The old woman's bitterness had, as usual, quenched itself in her grandchild's tears. The sting had been left in the wound; and she began, in a querulous tone, to compassionate herself.

"Well, well; the poor old woman had better be silent; the grave is slow to open, but it will

not be long before her old lips can move no more, and she will never again torment young people who throw themselves into passions for a word."

Victoria's tears were pent back, the embroidery was resumed, and the old look of quiet hopelessness settled down again on her features. She had no refuge but this; she was without God, and, therefore, without hope in the world; she had no horizon beyond the earth, and no Father on earth or in heaven.

The window at which she usually sate looked on the palace of the Lady Ione. A strange fascination always kept her to that window, with its perpetual contrast. She was no angelic being; she had no superhuman philosophy; and if at times she felt a happy emotion in seeing the mother and children together, the habitual feeling was contrast and pain, with a dim sense that the unselfish rejoicing was what she ought to feel, adding to the constant pain the bitter sense of guilt. Of course this was morbid, but Victoria was morbid throughout. She had the universal disease of fallen humanity on her, and in her its gnawing pain was alleviated by no intoxicating cordials, and concealed by no feverish glow of transient pleasure. No strong natural ties for her counteracted the selfishness of her nature. She did not know the right names by which to call her wrong feelings, which we all do; a scientific nomenclature we sometimes mis-

take for religion. She had a burning, unquenchable desire to be happy, and she longed for love because the instinct of her heart told her love and joy were one; but self was her object; and in whatever form she veiled her aspirations, happiness was the substance veiled under all. This was certainly not heroic. It would have been more magnanimous and much more pleasant for her to have made a joy for herself out of the happiness of others—to have brought all the light of the happy home she saw into the desolate room where she dwelt, by the magic of sympathy—to have sate with her crippled, suffering frame, and made a beatific vision of the healthy, loving groups in the Lady Ione's palace. But she could not. Poor, lonely, with intense feelings unsatisfied, suffering, despised, she sate weaving with her fingers festive robes for feasts she could never see; and with her imagination tapestries of Elysian scenes of love, and joy, and life. Dark and hating darkness, sorrowful and longing for joy, the bitterest drop in her cup was that the light and joy around could not illuminate her heart, but only deepen its gloom. The eye, turned on self; the face, turned from the sun, converted all its sunbeams into shadows. The sun itself, making its photographs on her heart, saw all his lights metamorphosed into shades by the bitter ingredients there. She had never entered the palace. Her grandmother used to carry back her embroidery, and there-

fore its gates remained to her the portals of a sealed Elysium. Her dwelling stood on a high part of the city of Antioch. There was another window in the room which looked through a narrow opening in the irregular buildings around, straight to the sea. The sparkle of the blue waves was there; and above, a narrow strip of southern sky, large enough, nevertheless, for silver clouds to sail in it, and sunset colors to irradiate it, and lightnings to gleam in it, and many stars to smile from its depths—a little strip looking out into infinity. But Victoria never sate at that window. The heavens were nothing to her. Nothing was there for her but the sun, and moon, and stars, guided, perhaps, by the hand of some deified Ione, but in no way connected with her except as the embroidery and the charcoal brazier were. Her home to her was a place for working and weeping in, and heaven a machine working without wheels to turn the spit of human existence. She looked within, and felt not love; she looked around, and met it not; she looked up, and saw not God. And therefore she sate by the window in the narrow street, and worked on in a routine of toil to support a life which had no aim but to continue. Two things distinguished her from her grandmother. Graia had known wealth and family love, and to her sorrows were added the embittering sense of wrong and loss; and Victoria, dim and unfounded as the vision was, yet

knew what it was to hope. Two memories kept alive in her heart the idea of happiness and love —her name, with its associations of welcome and rejoicing; and the recollection of an illness of her grandmother, in which she had waited on her day and night, and amidst all her grumblings old Graia had once said—

"You poor child, I do believe, after all, you love me!"

CHAPTER II.

THE next day was a festival in Antioch. People thronged to the gardens by the Orontes, to sacrifice in the temples there. The city was brilliant with garlands, and tapestries, and gorgeous processions. Graia had gone out to take care of the house of a family who were keeping holiday. No processions ever passed down the lane in which Victoria lived. She sometimes crept up to the corner, or watched them pass a little way off; but to-day was one of her days of greatest suffering, and the lame girl sate by the window and embroidered, finding little luxury in an idleness which only threw her more drearily on herself. A holiday to her was simply a void. As the sate there, a little stir in the street aroused her; and looking up she saw a magnificent chariot draw up at the Lady Ione's door. The horses, with their necks reined in to a proud curve, the classical form of the chariot, and the beautiful, joyous face of the lady, as she waved a farewell to her children at the door, beamed like a vision of the gods on Victoria; and as the horses pranced away, they left her in

darkness, as if it had been a chariot of the sun. Before she resumed her work the little lane was again in motion; and from a low door at the corner issued Xystus, the carpenter, his three daughters, and his son, a fine sun-browned man, lately returned from a prosperous voyage, which accounted for the brilliant attire of the sisters. Xystus and Graia were far too close neighbours not to be enemies—the carpenter having, moreover, a temper which Graia could never resist the luxury of taunting into an explosion; and there were various standing grievances between them concerning rights of water and way, which excluded all intercourse between the young people. But now, as they went up the lane laughing and discussing plans for the day, Xystus' eye rested compassionately on Victoria—

"Does the old woman keep you at it, then, holidays and work-days?"

"No one keeps me," replied Victoria, laconically.

And the party passed on—not too quickly, however, for the lonely girl to hear the laughing comment—

"A taste of the hereditary sweetness there!"

The proud heart swelled at the taunt; but when the others turned the corner, little Rhoda, the carpenter's youngest child, came back and said, pressing a small silver coin into her hand—

"Buy some fruit, Victoria. I will bring you back some roses from the gardens."

Tears rose to her eyes, and choked the thanks she would have spoken; yet, when the child was out of sight, the old feeling of wrong came over her heart. How good happiness made everybody! Why should she be an object of pity to all, and a source of joy to none? The tears were dried up in the old inward fire; she did not take up her work, but sate with hands clasped on her knees, lost in bitter musings.

The old priest Ponthinus happened to be passing the window just then, and there was something in the maiden's attitude that arrested his attention. He stood gazing at her for some minutes, and at length uttered her name. She started.

"You look very miserable, child," he said; "what is the matter? Are you in want?"

"Not of bread," replied Victoria.

"You want to be at the festival in the gardens, poor girl! Well, I have been at many; and, after all, you would find it is more in fancy than in reality. People often return more worried and wearied than refreshed."

"But they have had enjoyment. They have rejoiced like birds in the sunshine. I would give anything," she exclaimed passionately, "to be happy—if it were only for a day!"

"Your grandmother might manage to take you once."

"Of what use would that be? She could not make me full of health and life like the rest. It

would be only to see more joy and feel it is not for me."

"But you ought to be glad in the happiness of others."

"I know I ought," she said, "but I am not."

"You would wish every one to be miserable?"

"No," she said, gloomily, "but the wretched should be banished into a world by themselves. Oh, why," she continued, "do not the gods make every one happy? They have such an abundance themselves, why do they not let every one share? It is so impossible to be good when one is miserable?

"Things do seem very confused and uneven here," rejoined the priest; "but they say there is another region where the virtuous are made happy, and the wicked suffer."

"But who knows it?" she asked. "Did any one ever come back thence to tell us? And if we knew there is indeed such a place, how are we to find the way thither? Or if we knew the way, how are we to walk in it? It seems so hard to struggle on through this misery, for the dim chance of the soul being happier one day; if, indeed, the soul is immortal. If the gods would only begin with making one happy, Pothinus—if they would make me full of health, body and soul, if they would pour the fulness of fresh life into every limb and every faculty—

if they would give me riches—how happy I would make every one about me—how I would love every one!"

Pothinus meditated a little, and then rising from the window-sill, where he had been leaning, he entered the room and seated himself.

"I have sometimes thought you admirably placed, Victoria," he resumed, "for realising the deeper truths of philosophy, the essence of which is veiled beneath the forms of popular worship. There is a Supreme Infinite Existence penetrating all existences, itself the only existence that really exists—the ground and substance of all things. From this Being we flow into the world of appearances, which exists not, but only appears and vanishes, or rather exists only in the Supreme Essence, and truly exists when it ceases to appear. Life is a shadow, or a dream, flitting across the infinite clearness of the unchangeable, and clouding it. Death dissolves the dream, disperses the cloud, and restores us to the calm of the Eternal."

Victoria fixed her eyes eagerly on the priest, and drank in his words.

"Are we this dream, then?" she asked, very slowly and earnestly, "or only our life? When we die, do we begin to exist in joy?"

"I scarcely think we may ruffle with the thought of joy the sublime calm of that immutable existence," he replied.

"Yet calm is very blessed to think of," she

rejoined; "if this is indeed true, and destined for us, Pothinus."

He shrank from the penetrating gaze of her dark eyes; he felt she was gazing through him, into his thoughts, to grasp some substance there.

"Why do you ask?" he said.

"Because, if this is true," she replied, in a low voice, "a little poison would bring one into it so soon!—away from all the wrong and suffering, and the weary toil and disappointed hope! Why do you not tell this to all the wretched, that they may know what death is, and venture to die? Have you been certainly assured of this?"

"Many of the wisest receive it," he said; "but we must not thus break the current of existence. The thought should raise you above the distresses of to-day into an atmosphere of enrapt contemplation. I told this to you that you might see what mere appearances and shadows our love and hate, and joy and sorrow are, and despise them."

"Oh," she replied, "you do not believe this; your philosophy is a plaything and a luxury; I want something to live on."

"You want much, it is true, to attain this sublime state; you are too impatient, too passionate, and, above all, personal. You want to absorb everything into yourself. The essence of true philosophy is for us to be absorbed into the Supreme Scurce of Being."

"What do you mean by being absorbed?" she asked.

"As the drop in the sea, as the sunbeam in the light!"

"But I am not a drop or a sunbeam," she replied; "explain to me."

"Individual existence is an apparition, and limitation," he replied; "birth is a death, confining the free spirit in a mould of clay. When we die, the individual is absorbed in the Infinite. This blind, struggling, limited self will exist no longer, but flow again into the Eternal Substance."

Victoria pressed her hands on her eyelids.

"This is difficult," she said. "Myself?—that is, I! If this be true, then it seems to me to make life more important than ever, Pothinus, since it is absolutely all we have. My death may add to the Supreme existence, but to me it is annihilation. It were as well to be nothing, as absorbed into something which is not me Oh, Pothinus, this philosophy is too hard for me! The old childish faith is happier: I might meet my mother's shade in Elysium; but as a drop in the infinite ocean, what is she to me? Are you sure this is true, Pothinus?"

The old priest looked perplexed for a moment at the inadequacy of his consolation; then he said, taking refuge in the aristocratic distinction of an inexplicable theory—

"Poor child! the unveiled light is too dazzling

for thine eyes; keep, then, thy vision. What have I been dreaming of—teaching philosophy to thee? Take this."

And he would have placed money in her hand; but she gave it gently back to him, and said—

"Give it to some happy child — it can buy sweets for the happy; it can purchase no medicine to heal me."

He went away, murmuring, like the carpenter—

"Too much of the grandmother there! Why did I waste my words?"

So the holiday passed. Graia came back from her charge; and at night Victoria heard the the merry voices of the family ringing through the lane—and she remembered that she had not spent Rhoda's coin.

CHAPTER III.

"VICTORIA," exclaimed little Rhoda, the carpenter's daughter, as she brought the roses she had promised, the next morning, "there is a man come to Antioch who can heal all kinds of diseases. Will you go and see him?"

"Where is he to be found?" asked Victoria; but the despondency of her accents responded faintly to the hopeful tone of the child.

"He is a Jew, I believe, and is often in their synagogue. My father will not let me go there; but it could do you no harm to try."

"The Jews are always boasting of some wonderful powers beyond every one else," said Graia; "they are an ignorant, bigoted set, and care for no one but themselves, except to get money out of them. People say they were a race of runaway slaves, made themselves rich by spoiling their masters, and then boasted of it. They call us all Gentiles, and think the world was made for them. You will get nothing from a Jew, child, without giving him double."

"But," interposed Rhoda, "they say these

are a new kind of Jews, and my brother liked what he heard; and he says they like best to exercise their cures on the poor."

"Something black underneath," muttered Graia; and Rhoda left, much discouraged, only saying—

"This is the day the Jews meet in the synagogue."

But in the evening Victoria wrapt her veil around her and said—"I am going, grandmother."

"Get there if you can," was the reply; "I will have no hand in it. It is either an imposture or it is magic—or both."

Slowly and painfully the orphan girl crept along the streets, until the thicker concourse of people, dressed much in the same costume, and stamped with the indelible characteristic features of their race, made her sure she had found the synagogue of the Jews; and she glided in among the women. She saw no sign of any work of healing being contemplated. Every eye was fixed on one form worn by many toils, and one face marked by many conflicts, and yet inexpressibly radiant; and when he rose to speak, all hung on his words; and Victoria could do nothing but look and listen like the rest.

* * * * * *

Thus hours passed on, and seemed but moments. When she returned, she found her grandmother anxiously looking out for her at the cor-

ner of the lane. When they met, however, the old woman merely said—

"A fool's errand, as I very well knew; you return as you went."

Victoria made no reply, but entered the room and seated herself quietly in her usual seat, while Graia, muttering and scolding, prepared her supper, and at length set it before her. Still Victoria sat with clasped hands, and neither moved nor spoke.

"Are you bewitched, child?"

"I cannot eat to-night, grandmother," she said, gently pushing away the food.

"You might at least have said that while I was cooking it. But what ails you, child?" she exclaimed, for the tears were quietly coursing each other down the girl's pale cheeks.

"Nothing ails me, grandmother," was the reply; and then fixing her eyes on Graia with an earnestness which obliged her to listen, she continued—"I have everything my heart can desire, and I shall never know envy nor bitterness of heart. I knew Him not, I sought Him not; but I have found happiness, for I have found God."

There was something in the expression of the maiden's face, and in that Name, uttered for the first time in that dreary room, which awed the old woman into silence, and Victoria went on—

"It is true that joy is the atmosphere of

goodness. I knew it, and now I feel it. There is one God, and He is the Father. He is everywhere, and He is love. He is with me and He loves me. But in us there is hatred and sin, which He hates. We have all wandered far from Him, and have been lost. God so loved us, even when we were wandering and grieving Him, that He has given His only Son, who is one with Himself, to become a man, and to die for our sins. He lived in Galilee, and went about the towns and villages healing the sick, and doing good to every one. At last, from envy, only a few years since, they nailed Him to a cross like a slave. He bore our sins there, and died. He has taken away our sins—all of them—for ever. After lying three days in the grave, He rose again, and now He lives in heaven, and loves us, and leads us day by day, loving us as the Father loves Him."

"Who told you this?" said Graia.

"The Jewish teacher in the synagogue," said Victoria.

"I do not see anything in it," replied Graia, after a pause of some length. "What signs have you of this love you speak of? If you had been cured of your lameness, it would have been a different thing."

"Oh, grandmother," replied the girl, "God has given us Himself; and after that all the rest is so little, I do not want any sign to convince me of His love."

"But how do you know this is true?" asked Graia.

"There were many witnesses of His death and resurrection," replied Victoria; "but He has sent down another witness into my heart, and has revealed it all to me, and my heart can no longer doubt that God is, and that He is love, than my eyes that the sun is light. Every word that the holy man spoke streamed into my heart with the assurance of something I saw. It is true, grandmother," she continued; "it is true for you and for me for ever."

The old woman muttered something about infatuation and the Pythoness, but she attempted no controversy; and the happiness which Victoria had thought at first too great to allow her to eat or sleep that night, at length soothed her into a peaceful slumber, such as she had scarcely known since the voice of her mother lulled her in fancy to sleep beneath the watchful eyes of love.

She woke—no more an orphan. The love which had given her sleep was around her at her waking—around her, above her, within her inmost heart. The little room had its usual aspect, but to her eyes everything was changed. The embroidery, no more associated with toil and money, gave promise of hours of quiet communion with the Infinite Source of joy who would never forsake her. The window, looking into the lane, was an outlet for her heart into the world of humanity; and she—even she—had

a treasure to communicate surpassing all riches, and a balm to impart mighty for all diseases. The worn and aged form which lay on the pallet beside her—the face, whose deep furrows of sorrow and discontent sleep could not smooth—what joy to her it would be to see it beam beneath the new light and life to which her eyes had opened! And as she silently dressed, so as not to break her grandmother's rest, the second window shone before her as if it had now first been opened. The lane was silent in the early morning, and the little strip of western sky began to glow like an opening rose with the reflection of the sunrise in the east, whilst beneath sparkled innumerable waves. It was like a new revelation to Victoria, though for thousands of mornings the same sunbeams had shone into that room. Her heart was in sympathy with light, and she knelt before the little window and worshipped God. Her soul also was glowing with the reflection of a Sun newly risen on her, but never to set. All her prayer was—"God, my Father! Christ, my Lord!" And, as she rose, the happy thought came into her mind, "I know now the meaning of my name. It was a prophecy—I shall overcome."

When Graia awoke, the fire was lighted, the simple meal was nearly ready, and the girl was seated working. Graia gazed some minutes on Victoria's face without speaking. It was to her what that strip of western sky was to Victoria

—the reflection of a glorious, but to her a hidden sun. But there was something in the maiden which shed a strange, subdued feeling ever her, and the railings against Jewish impostors, and silly, credulous girls, died on her lips; and she ate her breakfast without grumbling at any one. On the window ledge stood the roses Rhoda had brought; Victoria looked and wondered at their beauty; and carefully picking off the dead leaves, placed them in fresh water; they seemed like a smile from God, and a command from Him to carry the good tidings to the child who had brought them. In the course of the morning Rhoda passed. She looked in at the window, and seeing Victoria's pale face, said in a disappointed tone—

"Oh! you have not been to try the cure!"

"Yes, I have."

"Then it has failed! It was an imposture!"

"It has not failed, dear Rhoda," was the reply. "It is the truest thing in the world, and I have received all I want."

"What do you mean, Victoria?"

"I am no more an orphan, Rhoda; I have found a Father and a Friend who loved me more than His life."

"Come and see for yourself," she continued, as the child gazed at her in perplexity; "the good news is for you and for all." Rhoda obtained her father's permission; and on that very day—the Jewish Sabbath—the child supported the tottering steps of the cripp.ed girl to the

Jewish synagogue. Light cannot be light without illuminating, and so the good news spread. It was the same voice which spoke again, and the same message—the voice of that faithful apostle who determined to know nothing but Jesus and Him crucified, and kept to his determination. In the child's heart there was no opposition, as on the lame girl's there had been heavy burdens; and before long it was rumoured that there were two "Christians" in that narrow lane. For "in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians." Happy disciples! So characteristic was their conversation, that the world, looking on them, could not fail to see to whom they belonged, and in whom they rejoiced, and called them by no other name than that of their Lord. Happy times, we might say, in which no minor distinctions divided the Church, and no petty controversies veiled the truth; but the contest was manifestly, as it ever is really, between Christ and the Devil! Happy times!—if, indeed, happiness to the Christian were ever in times or circumstances, and not in the immutable love of Him whose fulness filleth all time and all place.

Not a controversy had arisen, but the source of all controversies existed in the hearts of the maidens themselves. Victoria had heard no discussions about the nature of the Godhead, the relations between justification and sanctification, the perpetuity of faith, or the place of assurance. Pure and full from the lips of an

apostle they had heard the gospel concerning Jesus. They had received Christ as the Saviour, their Lord and their God: receiving him they received life, and they knew it—life not hanging on themselves, but hidden in Him—a life whose very characteristic instinct is immortality—yet a life incapable of existing for an instant severed from its Source—incapable of existing healthily for an instant out of communion with Him.

Their religion was founded on facts, not on feelings: the crucifixion which had redeemed them, the resurrection in which they had risen with Christ, the inward revelation of Christ to the soul, the Spirit writing on their hearts the record concerning the Father and the Son—this was the basis of their creed.

Yet are we in these old and distant days no poorer than they—no farther from the Fountain of Light. They had the words of living apostles, and the sight of visible miracles. We have the living words of the living God, through apostles and prophets; the perpetual miracle of conversion, and the contrasts of a thousand forms of error to illustrate the true light. Never let us give place to the unbelieving thought that the Church has travelled away from the days of Christ, as if her communion with Him were a historical appreciation, instead of a living intercourse. With the Church the living presence of her Lord abides; and her journey is not from the sunrising, but towards it.

CHAPTER IV.

WITH this great change in Victoria s inward life, vanished all restless longing for change in outward circumstances. The little room was such a quiet and happy place—the toil which occupied her busy fingers left her heart so free! Yet the little room itself soon gained a more cheering aspect; for the faith which united Victoria to the Fountain of all joy, did not render her indifferent to outward things. It made her content with them, and, therefore, disposed not only to see the best in them, but to make the best of them. Providence and grace were for her but different streams of the same love; the gifts of one were as sacred to her as the gifts of the other, and as religiously to be used and enjoyed. Contentment, converted by godliness into thankfulness, did not lull her into indolence, but braced her to activity; and, poor as the little dwelling continued, there began to be an order and freshness about it, which reflected a sense of comfort and repose, even on the embittered heart of Graia, although she steadily refused to have anything to say to this new doctrine.

Victoria was still the poor crippled girl. No miracle had been wrought on her feeble frame. The signs of miraculous healing were for the world, but could not be suffered to interfere with the higher blessings and teaching sickness brings to the believer, or to banish the "often infirmities," which were to cherish peaceable fruits in the soul. But the peace which ruled in her heart gave a freedom to the use of her physical faculties, which was in itself a new faculty. The hands, which ceased to struggle with the Helmsman for the guidance of the vessel, found leisure for much fruitful work elsewhere.

At first, she transferred her embroidery to the little window which looked on the sky and the sea. These works of God, which had no independent self to divert them from their true Centre, became so dear to her. They were living words of God to her, and there Victoria and the child spent many happy hours—the child unravelling threads for the embroidery, and the two conversing on the truths which had been revealed in the last sermon of the Apostle Paul. These sermons were all their Bible, and carefully did they treasure in their hearts the fragments which, for us, are gathered in one imperishable volume. Often Victoria was unable to attend the services, and then Rhoda's reports were the joy of the week. Then they sometimes sang sweet, simple hymns to each other, "making

melody in their hearts." Graia occasionally listened, whilst apparently busy about her household work, though she refused all conversation on these subjects; and often she left the maidens alone whilst she went out for a day's work. But she certainly grumbled less. Christianity, however, was not only a restored communion with God—it was a confession of Christ; and, in those days confession stood in comparatively little danger of being confounded with profession—opening, as it did, a vista, in which no divine promise and no human safeguard lay between confession and martyrdom, baptism and the cross—witnessing and martyrdom being, indeed, in one form or another, synonymous.

Love had then often great sacrifices to make, and always great sacrifices to contemplate, and therefore it was fervent and true—sacrifice being its best fuel. The day came when it was no more to be an indistinct rumour that Rhoda and Victoria were Christians; but, in the waters of baptism, they joyfully confessed that they were buried with Christ to the world, and had risen with Him in His resurrection—that henceforth the life they lived in the flesh was by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them, and gave Himself for them.

The ceremony was so simple, that its name is the only description left to us. Its glory, like all the true glory, as yet, of Christ and the Church, was invisible. Its joy was known only

to the love which the act of obedience blessed. But the act, or sacrament, which thus separated them from the world, by declaring their union with Him who is not of the world, had another aspect. It introduced them into the communion of the Church—not actually, for that the cross alone could do; or sensibly—that faith in the Crucified had done; but manifestly. It associated them also with that Family Feast which pointed, from the death which purchased redemption, to the advent which should redeem the purchased possession. A blessed and solemn privilege was this to Rhoda and Victoria! They were no more isolated—they were received as children of a most blessed family, amongst which apostles and prophets laboured, "exhorting them that, with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord"—a family, also, in which there were many sufferers, with whom Victoria knew well how to weep, because beneath the the current of her tears and theirs flowed an inexhaustible ocean of joy.

Thus, by degrees, the lame girl learned that all the bitter discipline of her early life had had its blessed aim; and saw how, in the furrows of affliction, many a lowly healing herb had sprung. And to that humble room came many to seek sympathy and counsel, from one who, amidst much weakness, had needed and found more grace. The new life within her found the sphere for its every energy in the living Church—first-

fruits of the new creation; and thus, as it must be when the eye is single and the master God, the contest with sin went on as the contest between death and life in trees through which the sap rises with the spring. She thought of God and His Church, and He cared for her. Service was her work; sanctification was God's. Or rather, to trace the stream higher, whilst she endeavoured, according to that one command, which enfolds all, to abide in Christ, holiness became not a work, but a fruit—not the result of successive efforts, but the fulfilment of a promise, and the natural development of life. Her eye was fixed on Jesus, and His on her. His eye guided her in His way, and her gaze transformed her into His image.

As her sight of God's purposes, and the meaning and aim of this earthly sojourning became clearer, she began to perceive that the service of earth is chiefly a work, not of contemplation, but of ministry; and that the meanest fellow-creature, made in His image, and fallen from it, might be a medium of deeper communion with God, and higher service to Him, than all the glories of the sky and the sea. Although, therefore, the window through which came the glow of sunset, and over which shone the stars, remained her favourite place, in her seasons of prayer,—she quietly removed her embroidery again to that which looked on the narrow lane and the palace. The house of the Lady Ione

became again the most frequent object of her contemplation, but with feelings how changed! The yearnings of affectionate compassion had taken the place of the gnawings of envy. She knew of a gift and a joy so unspeakably beyond all this world could offer, that the great desire of her life became to make it known to others. In her narrow horizon, with the monotonous rotation of her daily life, that palace remained the object of intensest interest. But, in gaining access to Him whose touch can set in motion the springs of the heart as easily as those of the universe, her solitary musings were regenerated from dreams into prayers; and, day and night, the names of the Lady Ione and her children were breathed in loving intercession before God. Prayers offered in Christ ascend into heaven. How wonderful, then, is this privilege of intercession, that, while the lady of the world went on in the fulness of her earthly prosperity, and never looked towards the heavens, nor knew Who dwelt there, her name was heard there with the request for blessings on her of which she never dreamed! And both the name and the request were never forgotten. Often, also, Victoria asked further, that, if it might be, the message of peace might enter the palace through her means; and, if she indulged in day-dreams, it was of some sacrifice, some suffering of hers, arresting the attention of that family, and the truth reaching the lady's heart through her

dying lips. At other times, in a more practical mood, she would discover reasons why she should herself carry back her embroidery one day to the Lady Ione, in person, and so obtain an interview, and boldly declare to her the gospel. Many speeches she constructed for this occasion—long and pathetic, or concise and impressive; but generally, before the end of the imaginary interview, she would smile at her visions, and end by speaking to the Saviour the desire she was not permitted to utter to man. One morning, as she was thus occupied, Graia returned from carrying her grandchild's work to the palace, and, entering the room, abruptly said—

"I do not know what trouble is before us now. The Lady Ione will see you herself about the embroidery; she would not entrust me with the money. I suppose they have heard some rumour of your new-fashioned religion, and will have nothing more to say to us."

Much to the old woman's astonishment, Victoria rose, with a beaming face, and prepared to throw on her veil.

"Are you wild, child? Did I say you were summoned this instant? You need not be in such a fever of haste. I bode no good from this, I can assure you."

With the instinct of obedience Victoria seated herself again. Colouring at her own eagerness, as if she had betrayed her visions, she sat some

minutes, endeavouring to compose her thoughts, and not to irritate her grandmother by asking inopportune questions. After an interval, however, which seemed to her a long exercise of patience, she ventured to ask when she was requested to go.

"To-morrow morning," was the laconic reply; "and little time enough that is to wash and dry your veil, and to prepare all your best clothes."

Graia's foreboding words had made a far deeper impression on Victoria's mind than on her own; and the abrupt transition, from the idea of martyrdom to these homely preparations, dispelled the maiden's visions, though only thus laying bare to the sunshine the hope from which they sprang.

Meantime, Graia was busy in an inner closet exploring certain long-sealed treasures, and before long she re-appeared with sundry ornaments, relics of her own early days and those of Victoria's mother, which, though to us they might seem classical, to Victoria seemed merely antiquated. Taste and principle both determined her against any display of the kind; after a contest of some length between passive resistance and active remonstrance, Graia was defeated; and ever afterwards, in the spirit of true soldiership, retained a higher idea of her granddaughter's character. The ornaments and dresses were laid aside; and with the exception of one intaglio clasp to her simple mantle, and an extra

tinge of whiteness in her veil, no change was made in her ordinary costume.

It was late that evening before either of them retired to rest; and in the silence of night her dreams of her earlier years of darkness, and the prayers and purposes of these later months of light and peace, came back on the lonely girl, and she spent half the night in thoughts of what she would say and do. She thought of throwing herself at the lady's feet, and conjuring her to accept the gift of God. She thought of standing like a prophetess, in her weakness and poverty, and telling her the Divine message, of which all who know it are called to be ambassadors. And then, when body and mind were wearied with plans and anticipations, she lifted up her heart to her Father in heaven, and asked Him to direct her, and so fell quietly asleep.

She awoke the next morning at her usual hour, refreshed and peaceful; and, after her morning prayer, with its special petition, and her frugal breakfast, set off, under Graia's escort, for the palace.

Her heart beat very fast when they reached the gate, and still faster when the porter, hearing their errand, dismissed the old woman, and told the maiden to wait inside the gate. It was so strange to be inside the gates which contained her dream-world, and to feel her whole every-day world outside, and yet be herself so like her

everyday self. But one desire in her absorbed all others. Might she not be approaching the moment to which her dreams and prayers so long had tended? might not blessings incalculable flow from one word faithfully spoken? and would not grace be given her to speak that one word? It was, therefore, in no lofty prophetic spirit that she waited the longed-for interview, but with a sense of much weakness entrusted with a gospel of infinite joy, with a heart beating quick and fearfully, yet full of the confidence of a happy child sent on a pleasant errand.

She had not long to wait; a richly-dressed female slave came to conduct her. Victoria might have been bewildered into some act of homage by the lofty manners and gorgeous apparel of the waiting-maid, had not she known the Lady Ione's face so well. The splendour of the rooms through which she was led did not at all dazzle her; she had been imagining them all her life, and they seemed but the natural setting for the jewel. She reached the lady's presence, therefore, and stood before her quite calmly; much more calmly than she had often stood there in her day-dreams. But when the soft musical voice fell on her ears, appealing to a fresh sense that all this was no dream, the reality for a moment became too much for the poor girl, the colour left her face, tears started into her eyes, and she could scarcely breathe. The lady observed her, and kindly desired the

slave to offer her some refreshment. But Victoria recovered herself with one glance of her heart upward, and, declining any help, asked the lady's pleasure. She was summoned to aid in preparations for a wedding; and then, for the first time, Victoria perceived the presence of a younger lady, the eldest daughter of the house, one of the fair children she had so often watched. This was the bride, child as she seemed. The sunbeam of the house, the maiden Mariamne, was about to leave it.

Hours passed in discussion about lengths and breadths, and designs and materials, and it was late in the day and Victoria was weary and confused by the time her conference was over, and the slave was desired to reconduct her to her home. Yet not a word had been said about the object deepest and uppermost in the poor girl's heart. It seemed to her now as if it would have been so much easier to have spoken at first, before her mind had been brought down and distracted by all these details. But Victoria's religion was a faith in imperishable truths, not a persuasion about fluctuating feelings; and she could not leave the room without saying one word. She therefore hesitated still on the threshold while the slave impatiently motioned her onwards. At length the Lady Ione observed her, and asked if she had anything further to say. She would have thrown herself on her knees and bathed the lady's hands in tears;

but fearing to offend by any such demonstration of feeling as would have been natural to her, but must have seemed extravagant and incomprehensible to those who know not its source, she stood still where she was, silently clasping her hands, and said, in a deep and quiet but faltering tone—

"If the Lady Ione, who has so much, had only one thing besides!"

"What do you mean? Suggest any thing you like."

"If she only knew what it is to be a Christian, to know the love of God, to love Him and be forgiven, and have peace with Him because His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, died for us."

There was something in the quiet earnestness of the tone that touched the lady, although she knew nothing of the intense feeling that quietness concealed. And after a moment's pause, she said—

"Are you a Christian?"

"I am."

"And it makes you happy to be one?"

"I never knew what happiness was till I knew this," was the reply; "and now I have peace, and such a hope, lady, besides."

"That must be a great comfort to you," said the lady, compassionately; "I am glad to think there is a religion which can make the poor happy."

"But, lady," said the girl, fixing her eyes

wistfully on Ione's, "the message is for you also; the joy is meant also for you."

A slight flush of pride rose to the lady's cheek. She could not at all comprehend any message which could be equally for her and the poor deformed embroideress, and she said, kindly but coldly—

"Thank you, my good girl; I am sure your intentions are good, but I am not in want of anything of the kind. Farewell."

And, with a gracious smile, she came forward and placed some money in Victoria's hand, then swept out of the room with Mariamne. The poor girl longed to refuse the coin; but she thought of her grandmother, and the coming winter, and felt she must deny herself the luxury of this apparent disinterestedness.

Slowly Victoria retraced her steps to her lowly dwelling; and when she reached the old seat by the window, exhausted in body and spirit, and looked at the palace, whose interior was no longer a mystery, for a moment disappointment overwhelmed faith—disappointment at the conscious feebleness of her words, and at their effect; and, leaning her face on her hands, she wept silently, and thought, "Is this the end of so many hopes and prayers?"

It was not the end; it was only the second barrier in the way, the first having been passed.

When the slave who had led Victoria out was

arranging the Lady Ione's toilette that evening, she asked—

"What did that strange girl mean to-day? Who are these Christians she spoke of?"

"I believe she is a little wild," was the reply. "As for these Christians, madam, I know little about them, I am happy to say; I have heard some of the under-servants speak of some meetings of theirs, but I believe they are a low kind of people, and I never trouble myself to inquire."

The next day the lady asked the same question of her husband,—a grave and sensible man, high in civic office in Antioch.

"Very dangerous people, indeed, my dear," was his reply; "a sect of Jews, but applying to the world the same turbulent doctrines by which their fellow-countrymen excite such intolerable disturbances in Judea, asserting there is a God, who is to be obeyed rather than the magistrates. I think very seriously of the question. In Antioch they have hitherto kept quiet enough; but from Asia Minor, and even from Greece, I hear alarming reports of them. They have excited tumults in Iconium and Derbe. At Lystra, the people were so excited against them, that they nearly stoned one of them to death; and at Philippi, I have been told the magistrates had to interfere in consequence of the turbulent harangues of the same leader,—a man, by the way, I have heard, of some education and talent."

"But what is it they teach? I never heard of them before to-day, when our little needlewoman, after a consultation about Mariamne's wedding dresses, broke into a rhapsody concerning joy and peace, and some strange gods in whom she wanted me to believe. What are these dangerous doctrines?"

"I do believe this word *dangerous* has a strange fascination for all women," he replied. "The docrine may be very good and sublime, as the Jewish is, if they would only keep it to themselves. All I know about the matter is, that it is a treason, and must be put down."

Victoria would not have been more encouraged had she heard the result of her testimony. Could she have seen into one heart in the palace it might have been otherwise.

Mariamne asked no questions, but she was satisfied with no answer she had heard, and she silently resolved to know more of the subject,—not because her curiosity was awakened, but because her heart was touched with a want—a hunger never to be satisfied with "that which is not bread."

CHAPTER V.

THE night's rest and the morning's prayer brought happier thoughts to Victoria, and it was with a cheerful heart she established herself at her wonted place, and began to arrange in her mind the designs for the bridal dresses. It was strange to look up at the palace, and feel it no longer a sealed casket. The last spot of dreamland was now for her reclaimed into actual life; but it lost nothing by the change—the meanest fragment of time, which is lighted from the depths of eternity, is so much more glorious than the most gorgeous visions. Her prayers acquired a greater definiteness, and also became more purified from that spiritual selfishness which would cut up the great harvest-field into narrow allotments, where one labourer is to do all the work, and receive all the reward. Her prayers became less "Permit me to do this work," and more "Do Thou bring back these lost sheep, and appoint me the work Thou seest best,"—secure that the joy of her Lord must one day be hers.

One morning the priest Pothinus spoke to her as he passed the window.

"You look happier than you did," said he;

"is it true that you have been deluded by this new fanaticism?"

"I have found," she replied, "that my way of making people good was the true one."

"I thought you gave up all old ways," he rejoined, "for this new Jewish superstition?"

"I have given up all old ways," she said, "for the new living way. I have found that God's way to make men holy is to make them happy, and that His first gift is rest of heart."

"New prophets always promise largely," the priest observed.

"We have no promise in this world," was her reply, "but peace in the midst of tribulation."

"I have no opinion of triumphs before the battle."

"We do not triumph before the battle," she replied; "the battle has been fought for us, and won; we are only the ransomed captives in the train of a conqueror."

"I do not want any battles fought for me," rejoined the old man, gruffly; "the nobler method is for every one to fight his own battles. The old heroes would have scorned such a destiny."

"We have all our fights to fight," she said; "but when one is weak, it is happy to contend under the eye of One who has broken the enemy's strength, and taken his stronghold."

"You have learned a store of enigmas, at least," said Pothinus.

"I have learned the answer to all," she replied, gently.

"Well, it would be cruel to disturb you in your easy faith," he said; "they require neither money nor labour of you, do they? but only for each one to do what he likes."

"God has given all to us," she replied, solemnly; "the Just and Holy One, whose law cannot be broken, has sacrificed His beloved Son to bear our punishment. For this He only asks our love. But to prove our love, the world has required some of us to endure tortures and death, and they have been borne joyfully. God requires no sacrifices from us, safe the gratitude of the heart; but the world requires many from those who obey Him. Our sins cause us many sufferings, our religion none; it is the balm for all. And those who have suffered for His name's sake,—Jesus, who was crucified for us,—count it all joy; and I am sure it must be so; it is so blessed when one loves and owes so much, to be able to shew it!"

After that conversation, Pothinus would often come and talk with Victoria, although he generally concluded with some contemptuous remark; nevertheless, he came again.

Thus the circle of Victoria's intercessions enlarged. Her life had long ceased to be monotonous. All the interests of the Church of Christ were hers; and the horizon of her love and hope was wide as the world, and wider

than time. The Christian's family circle is Christ's—the whole family in heaven and earth, and all the prodigals who may be brought into it. If at any time the old lonely feeling crept over her, of hers being a narrow and barren life, she knew it was sin which brought it—the one radical, primeval sin of making self the centre, instead of God; one look at Jesus sufficed again to sweep away the darkening barrier, and once more to place her, lowly and loving, in the blessed, innumerable company of the redeemed.

There were perplexities also for Victoria from without, as well as from within. The faith, indeed, had come to her pure and fresh as from the hand of God; the Church among which she dwelt had been planted by the persecuted brethren of the first martyrs, and taught by the lips of the Apostle of the Gentiles. But sin dwelt in her soul, and in the hearts of those primitive believers, and Satan went to and fro among them, leaving everywhere his harvest of falsehoods to choke the truth, or his leaven of perverted or anachronised truths to corrupt it. Not a fanaticism was too wild, nor a superstition too narrow, to find its followers in those early days. Sometimes an officious Jew would perplex her with instructions as to all manner of traditional observances, which, having lost their typical meaning, had become worse than empty. Sometimes she would be told that the whole body of Christian truth—the very person of the Christ

—was merely a veil for a higher universal truth, and that the resurrection of the Church was an allegory. Thus, as it ever is, she had watchfully to steer her course between Externalism and Spiritualism,—a religion which would make outward observances the object of life, and one which would make inward experiences the object of faith—between the theory that man was made for the Sabbath, and the theory that the Sabbath was not needed by the spiritual man. Between these she walked steadfastly, not because she could always seek the living guidance of Apostles, for the Apostles had all the churches to care for—not because she had wisdom to analyse every error—but because, keeping her eye steadfastly fixed on the Saviour, He drew her on in the straight path by the attraction of love and the power of the single eye.

It was a great joy when the narrative of on of the Evangelists, or the epistle of an Apostle, reached the Church. Eagerly did the band of Christians collect to hear the Divine words read again and again; and faithfully did Rhoda and Victoria treasure them in their heart; it was the only Bible they possessed.

The uniting power of common joys and sorrows was also present to prevent any rising divisions. The whole Church was, by the nature of its institution and the power of its life, a missionary society; and often, when they were gathered together to break bread, and no Apostle

was present to speak to them, the acts of Apostles were recounted to them; and the thanksgiving arose to God from the tidings of new churches springing up in Greece and Italy; and their own hearts glowed deeper as they watched the illumination spreading from city to city.

Thus the days passed quickly on with Victoria. The bridal dresses were finished; the bridal procession issued from the doors of the palace, and Victoria's prayers extended to another home, as she followed Mariamne in thought to her new abode. Still no apparent answer came to them. She had no second summons to enter the gates. Pothinus, the priest, also seemed to become rather hardened than softened, and for many weeks he had ceased to hold any intercourse with her. Thus whilst the one intense longing remained to see the blessing given before she died, faith became more and more the strength of Victoria's prayers; she learned to rest more on the promise of the harvest, and the love and truth which had promised, instead of spending her prayers in watching the clouds, and searching for the first symptom of the blade; her hopes were more concentrated in the one "blessed hope," which is the fulfilment of all, —the hopes of His appearing, which is also ours.

Meantime, as the Church increased and was faithful, the bitterness of the adversaries increased also. Some of the crops had failed; and when the people sought to appease the anger of

the gods by sacrificing in the temples, the priests murmured darkly about the new sect whose impiety drew down the curse.

One morning Pothinus had gone directly from a conversation with Victoria, more irritated than usual, to his services in one of the temples. His mind was gloomy and disturbed; and as one and another of the votaries came to him complaining of the inefficacy of their offerings, the poverty of their vineyards, and the unfavourableness of the weather, he hinted that it was little wonder Antioch should lose her prosperity, whilst she tolerated the gloomy blasphemers of her sunny gods. The suggestion sank deeper than he meant.

The next day was the first day of the Christian week; and as Victoria and Rhoda were proceeding to the house in which the Christians met, they noticed many a scowling glance directed on them. The lame girl insisted on Rhoda hurrying on to their destination, saying one would attract less attention than two; and trembling, yet unshrinking, she crept on after her. As she approached the house, the groups became more frequent, and angry mutterings accompanied the angry looks. Yet she reached the gate in safety, and was thankfully entering, when a stone struck her ancle and threw her violently against the edge of the gateway. Other missiles followed, and, bleeding and insensible, she was drawn within the house.

Every tender care was lavished on her there. She was laid in a little chamber opening on the hall of meeting, and remained insensible as they gathered weeping around her, for many had received loving words of sympathy and counsel from her. At first they hesitated to bind up her wounds, believing she could not survive, and fearing to wake her to pain. But as they were still around her, one praying beside her couch, she calmly opened her eyes, and asked them to proceed with the usual service. Then, beginning to feel the pain of her wounds, and to recall what had happened, she passionately begged to be taken home.

They remonstrated with her; but it was not until they convinced her of the danger encountered in carrying her through the city that she could be dissuaded. Then she murmured almost unconsciously, "Thy will—not mine—be done;" and resigned herself to have her wounds bathed and bandaged.

The effort seemed to exhaust her. She asked again that they would proceed to the blessed feast which they had met to keep. The curtain which divided off her little chamber was raised, so that she might share in the communion; the memorial bread and wine were given her, and after that the flush seemed to pass from her cheek, she became composed, and in a little while she fell asleep.

When she awoke, the disciples had separated,

and only old Graia stood watching her. Two large tears trickled down the old woman's withered cheeks, and she met Victoria's first inquiring glance in silence. The lame girl stretched out her hands imploringly, and said, "Home, home! Take me home." Yet, after the first incontrollable impulse, her consideration for others revived, and she quietly submitted to remain where she was. No one could understand why she should long for the old, dull room in the narrow street. They thought it a mere morbid symptom of the fever, and tried to turn her thoughts from it, as they would a child, by talking of other things; and when her earnest, wistful eyes turned to heaven, and she lay still and listened, they thought she was satisfied.

But in her delirious wanderings at night, the unsatisfied longing came out, and she murmured about deserting the charge God had given her, about the Lady Ione and the priest. Then she would talk fast and wildly about a palace besieged, and combatants around it, and see visions of fresh and happy faces borne away into the blackness of darkness, and cry in agony that she was abandoning them to destruction. At such times, no one could calm her but Graia. The old woman spoke to her as to an infant; called her long-forgotten names of endearment, and soothed and caressed her so tenderly, that others could scarcely have recognised the usual harsh, complaining tones. But Victoria always

knew them, and smiled back a happy, conscious smile, beaming like a sunbeam through the mist of her poor, troubled brain; and sometimes she would say, "O blessed Jesus, see! I have not deserted her; she will yet come home to Thee!" And Graia never contradicted. At length, the physician declared he could do nothing for her. There was a weight on her heart he could not remove; and, unless that could be lightened, she must sink.

Every evening since the assault, an old gray-haired man had crept stealthily to the door of the Christian house, and asked tidings of the sufferer, carefully concealing his face and name. As the report became worse, however, his anxiety visibly increased, and, at length forgetting all his precautions of concealment, he waylaid the physician, and asked him to tell the whole truth.

"She is dying," was the reply, "unless her mind can be set at rest, and that seems impossible. She appears to long for her old home, and it might be death to her and to her escort to convey her thither."

"But she must die unless this is done?"

"I see no alternative."

They separated; but, within an hour, that very evening a luxurious litter was brought to the door, with many bearers; an authoritative message was sent in as if from the physician; the wounded girl was gently laid in it, and

borne in safety to the little room opposite the Lady Ione's palace.

The first time for many nights, she slept, and the expression of repose came over her features.

Worn out by long watching, and quieted by hope, old Graia fell asleep on the chair beside her. When Victoria awoke, the old woman was breathing heavily, her head bent on her chest. Through one window her eyes rested on the clouds, strewing the sky like rose leaves, and the sea heaving and sparkling below. But her eyes did not rest long there; they travelled through the other to the gates of the palace. There sight was arrested, and faith took up her thoughts and prayers by the new and living way into the Father's house above. So she lay when Graia awoke and began to grumble at her own bad nursing, and her old, heavy eyes.

But Victoria took one of the old woman's hands in both her own transparent hands, and said, with the gentle authority of a sick child, whose sufferings and patience have given her a right to a reward—

"Kneel down by my bed, grandmother. We must pray together. I shall be well again. Jesus Christ, my Lord and yours, has heard our prayers, and we shall live to praise Him."

Old Graia's stoicism was fairly melted now. She knelt, and pressed her sobbing face on her granddaughter's hand, and sobbed out from time to time the words of her prayer.

"We thank Thee, O Jesus, Son of God," Victoria said. "Thou hast made me whole because Thou lovest us both, and Thou wilt give us all the blessings we can bear. Thou hast always been blessing us. We have not known Thee; we have distrusted Thee; we have murmured against Thee, and Thou wast nailed on the cross for us, and hast borne away all our sins. Our Father, we know Thee now! He has brought us near to Thee. He has redeemed us to Thee by His blood; and we will give thanks to Thee for ever."

She ceased, but old Graia did not rise.

"Something more for me, my child; I have sinned more than that. I have scorned and hated His name. I have hardened myself against His love. I have reproached Him; for I thought He was going to take thee from me, and see how little I knew Him!"

"Thou hearest," continued Victoria, in a low, deep voice, "Thou hearest, Lord, and Thou forgivest. For this also Thou hast suffered."

She could say no more. For some time the old woman could not be quieted. Then her sobs changed into silent, peaceful tears; until, rising gently, she kissed Victoria's forehead, and recommenced her household work.

Soon Rhoda came in to ask how the sufferer was.

"I have been doing my best to throw her into a fever again," said Graia. But Rhoda read her

happy tone and face; and between the three, from that time, it was understood that Graia was one of themselves; and though she sate silent, or busied herself about her work as they spoke together, they knew she was with them in heart.

The delirium did not return. An old gray-haired man was seen often hovering about the door of the little dwelling, and mysteriously depositing fruits and flowers on the window-sill; but it was not until some days after their return that Graia recognised him.

"Pothinus!" she exclaimed, "I thought you had abandoned us."

"So I had," he replied. "Is the child well?"

"Well enough to see you," said a sweet voice from within.

He entered, and stood like a culprit, gazing, however, steadfastly on Victoria.

"She will live!" he said at length. "But I did my best to murder her!"

"You did not come here to insult us in that way!" exclaimed Graia, with very much of the old warlike tone.

"It is true," he continued, in a voice which Graia thought intolerably cool and insolent, but which brought tears into Victoria's eyes. "I told them the Christians brought back the rains, and spoiled the crops. I did not believe my own words, but the people did; therefore the guilt was mine, and not theirs. I knew all the time what the truth was, and now I confess it.

I could not have done so, had she died who taught me all."

Victoria was weeping, but her grandmother looked more injured than forgiving, and muttered—

"I should think you never could." Then, as if suddenly remembering something, she went up to the old man, and said—"You and I may stand together after all, Pothinus. I have been a hypocrite too, and often reproached her for going where my heart told me to follow. And, after all, you did not throw the stones."

"I did worse," he said, solemnly. "O Victoria! I can bear to look at my crime as it is, for I do believe even that can be covered and forgiven. But, poor child, let me hear thee speak again."

She looked up with her happy smile, and said—

"*You brought me home.* It was you who sent the litter for me. So, grandmother, he *saved* my life."

He did not deny it; and Graia was quite overcome.

"And these fruits and flowers, too?" continued Victoria.

"They are not mine," he replied. "Watch the palace gate this evening." And he took leave.

Victoria watched, as she was told, till, just at dusk, she saw a slight female figure, wrapt in

mourning robes, issue from the gate and approach the window. And then, in the darkness of the little chamber, she watched the lady take, quietly, a little basket from beneath her mantle, and carefully place the rich fruits it contained on the window-sill. Victoria came forward and laid her hand on one of the lady's, and said—

"Dear lady, let me know whom to thank."

"You would not know me by my name," was the reply. "I am Mariamne, the daughter of Ione."

Not know the name which had not failed to pass her lips in prayer one day for years, even in delirium! Victoria trembled as she felt the blessing she had prayed for draw so nigh. It was like seeing God; and her flesh failed. Mariamne continued—

"And perhaps you would not know me if you saw me. You saw me once, but I am much changed, they say. I should never forget you. Do you remember the day when you came about my bridal dresses, and spoke to us? All the joy I looked for then on earth is gone, but the joy you spoke of has but just begun for us all. In my sorrow, I remembered your words; in that blessed hope my husband died, and in that we live."

The conversation was concluded within the lowly dwelling, and it ended in tears and prayer, mingled with speechless thanksgiving.

The first Christian assembly Victoria had strength to attend was in the palace of the Lady Ione. The cup and the bread of blessing were partaken there; and it was like a foretaste of a festival day which shall never set in tears, when Graia, and Victoria, and Rhoda, the carpenter's daughter, and the Lady Ione, and the widowed Mariamne, sate together at one table, guests of one Lord, children of one family.

When Graia was taken to her rest, one of the rooms in the palace became Victoria's home, but the old humble dwelling in the narrow street was not untenanted or joyless. Through the two windows the stars and the sun and the light of the Christian home shone on old Pothinus, servant of Christ and of the church at Antioch.

THE FALSE CHRIST:

A Tale of the Second Fall of Jerusalem.

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CHAPTER I.

THE tide of civilization had not yet swept away from the East, nor had Mohammedanism yet spread the death-like folds of its sensual fatalism over the earliest-peopled and richest regions of the earth—the regions which first echoed to heaven the music of human voices—which had first been enriched with the visible results of human thought—which had caught the first accents of the faith. The revelation, which was to give new life to the nations, had not yet left the Holy Land a silence and a waste—the reaction of vanquished Paganism had not yet paralysed churches where the first disciples were called Christians. There was still light in the Land of the Morning.

In Antioch, it was still remembered how "Paul and Barnabas" had been "recommended to the grace of God;" the marvels wrought by God, through them, amongst the Gentiles, in the coasts and islands around, were still talked

of. No commentaries had weakened the words, or superseded the writings of apostles. The only lives of saints yet written were those of the Twelve, with such brief glimpses of Mary the Blessed Mother, the Magdalene, and the family which Jesus loved, as made the heaven they had so recently entered seem no strange dwelling-place.

At Joppa, there still might have been old men, who had gazed, as wondering children, on Dorcas, when, at St. Peter's words, the dead eyelids unclosed, and she again entered on her earthly labours of love. The lives of these, and Priscilla, and Aquila, and Stephen, and John the Beloved, were the most recent biographies the Church then had—not as far from them as Whitfield, and Wesley, and Zinzendorf are from us. And in the villages, and seaports, and mountain-cities of Palestine, the effects of St. Paul's arguments—the look with which St. John spoke of his Master, when all the wild frenzy of the Son of Thunder had been steeped in the deeper glow of the Love he had dwelt with—the tone which softened St. Peter's Galilean accents when he pleaded for the Saviour he had denied—must have been spoken of familiarly in Christian homes, where little children gathered around the aged; for the volume of the Book, though collected from Ephesus, and Colosse, and Corinth, and Rome, was scarcely complete in every village church, far less in every hand; and

the Church in that age needed something to compensate the lost presence of apostolic men, and the incomplete distribution of apostolic writings—though rich beyond all the stores of family or local tradition, was the little company of believers to whose lot had fallen a Gospel or Epistle, with some one learned enough to decipher the black abbreviated manuscript. Happy for them that persecution kept them close in the darkness to Him who is Himself the Light, and that they were too often called to endure bonds and death for the name of Christ, to have time to speculate about His doctrine—too busy in contending against the low materialism of idolatry to materialise Christianity—too constantly exposed to personal conflict and suffering, to substitute abstractions for persons in their creed.

Adrian seems to have been amongst those emperors who enjoyed the exercise of ruling, more than the luxury of possessing empire. The empire was to him a field for energetic action, not a mere magazine of pomp; and in the "perpetual journey" of his life, he was now at Athens, erecting temples which were never finished, receiving apologies from the Christians, and decreeing compassion to their religion, as a harmless superstition—not more dangerous than the Egyptian worship of allegorical or substantial animals.

One hundred years since, the Son of God had returned to His eternal dwelling-place. The

story of His life, and death, and resurrection, of the redemption He had wrought, of the heaven He had entered and opened, was slowly undermining the whole fabric of Pagan society and religion, and neither Pagans nor Christians knew it. The spirit of martyr after martyr was received into heaven. Paganism triumphed, and Christians looked for the manifestation of the heavenly kingdom, and wondered when the heavenly city would descend out of heaven from God. Seventeen centuries roll between this time and that—all things have changed their forms. What seemed most solid in that old world, has passed away; only some of its thoughts have lived, and the memory of a few of its men and women. But the world and the Church still exist—the darkness contending against the light—the light seeking to penetrate the darkness; and before us still is the same Hope. It must be nearer. How much of the way yet remains?

The Jewish nation also had its hope. The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus was an event of the past generation. Many of the Jews had lingered through all the subsequent horrors in their Land of Promise, and multitudes were now returning, impelled by the restless longings of patriotism and faith. They had not yet grown accustomed to be as a byword amongst all nations—to the contempt and homelessness of their self-imprecated destiny. All their ambition had

not yet been crushed into that lowest form of it—the lust of money. They were again in their land in considerable force, and in a state of restless expectation, which exposed them to be the ready tools of any ambitious leader coming "in his own name."

In Cyprus, they had risen in mad rebellion against the yoke, and massacred the population there. The Emperor, and the Romans in general, hated them with that bitter hatred which springs from mingled contempt and dread.

Meantime, in Palestine many desolate places began again to blossom. On the hills, were the cheerful voices of the vine-dressers; on the plains, the feet of the husbandman; and in sheltered nooks, or on the level crests of mountains, towns and villages began quietly to rise from their ruins.

A cottage, with its vineyard, rose into the sunshine on the bright side of a deep valley. The roughness of its architecture broke its outlines into all kinds of picturesque light and shadow; and in the shadow of the low doorway stood a young girl, her slight form "making a sunshine in the shady place," as she watched an athletic-looking boy working among the vines below. At length, with a mixture of scorn and childish glee, he threw his tools on the ground and joined his sister.

"There, Achsah; the day's work is finished—the last stone is laid on the highest terrace—the

channel from the well is completed; and to-morrow the cool waters shall moisten the roots of the vines. Now come and sit with me under this old olive, which looks as if it had fluttered its gray leaves over the patriarchs."

"Our mother says woman's work is never done," said Achsah, looking into the cottage to see if she was wanted, with the superiority of a girl of twelve over a boy of fifteen.

"Our mother's never is," murmured the boy, glancing at a delicate woman who sate just within the shadow of the vineyard lodge, chanting a young child to sleep whilst she was weaving. "You don't want Achsah, mother?"

A consenting inclination of their mother's head, without raising her eyes, or interrupting her low, monotonous song, answered the children, and they started together for the well on the hill, which was their favourite retreat, with its date-palms and thick herbage, prudently taking their pitchers with them. Achsah sate on the edge and plaited grass; her brother leant against the wall beside her; the shadow of the arched waters was behind them, above, the sky (all its blue absorbed in the intense light)—below, the reach of the valley of Kidron, in that place widened into a hollow strewn with stones and fragments of rock. The desolations of the torrent remained; the good it had done seemed to have died with it. Beyond, the hills again hemmed the valley into its usual character of a

steep ravine; but over the summits of the lower hills rose in the distance the crests of the mountains around Jerusalem, sacred to the children by all the sublime memories and hopes of their nation, yet without its divinest associations, for to them the world seemed to be what it never has been—without a Temple, and without a Priest.

"It is different from our father's palace at Rome, Achsah."

"It is, Azor!" she replied, her large eyes expanding as the vision of splendour rose before her. "The slaves — the purple curtains — the marble floors—the golden cups and vases, and that inner garden, with the flowers and the fountain where we used to lie on the couches and dream what we would be!"

"It was not the dreaming I cared for, but the power," he said.

"And then," continued Achsah, "I remember how the Gentile women gazed at our mother's pearls and rich dresses. They used to speak of *their* husbands and brothers being with the Emperor's armies—of their heavy duties to the state—and the high, burdensome offices they held, and say they envied us our humble and more peaceful lot."

"But they did not!" exclaimed Azor. "It is better to be here, Achsah. The land is our own. I understand our father. If I were a great man,—or *when* I am, I will dress my slaves

in jewels and silks, and myself wear plain armour. We were like slaves there;—here we may soon be princes. Who cares for splendour who can have power? I liked the young Romans we knew at Rome so much better than the Greeks or our own people! They scorned me, I could see. I would have done the same, had I been they. What is the use of horses unless you can ride them to battle, or of a palace unless one can rule men from it?"

"But here," said Achsah, quietly, "we have neither splendour nor power."

"But we have hope, sister; and even now I feel more of a man. If we cannot be what by birth we are—princes of our tribe—it is better, at least, to be men and women, and not mere curiosity-hunters or gold-collectors. Those terraces and that lodge are our work. You and our mother depend on us—and I like that;" and among the broken terraces around them, the stones in some places dislodged by the wild growth of the rich southern vegetation—the vines, trampled by wild goats, or withered beside the choked-up water-courses—their eyes rested complacently on the green patch of maize, the neat terraces, and trained vines of the little rescued plot.

Achsah forgot the splendour in the happiness, and said—"Yes, it is better thus."

"It is better to be here," replied the boy hastily, "but not *thus*. We wait for better

days; the Promise of our fathers has yet to come."

A slight rustling among the large leaves around them checked him.

"I knew the creature would be here!" said Achsah, joyfully. "It has come here to drink every evening for the last week;" and rising, she filled one of her pitchers, and emptied it into the open basin before the well. A sharp face peered round the corner, and the bright eyes of a young fawn glanced timidly about. At first it shrank from the boy, but a little encouragement from Achsah's soft voice reassured it, and the graceful neck was bent over the water. Another rustling, and the sound of approaching footsteps, and it vanished like a spirit.

"It is mine; it is mine," exclaimed a happy girlish voice from below; and a young girl, on a mule, attended by an Egyptian female slave, and an escort, appeared in the valley. There seemed to be a discussion, but the girl had her way, and rushing up the steep sides of the hill, she was soon beside the Hebrew children, leaving the Egyptian panting after her. "Indeed it is mine," she said; "it was consecrated to Diana, because it is so white; but I saved its life, and I garland it every day, and feed it with perfumed cakes, as if it were the goddess herself, which, I am sure, must please her better. Lily, Lily!" she called, and at the well-known voice the little creature came bounding to its

mistress, and was captured and led away. Then turning back, the maiden said—"You have been kind to it; may I give you something?" And, calling the slave, she offered Achsah money, which she took, not knowing how to refuse it; but Azor impetuously threw the glittering pieces into the dry bed of the Kidron below.

The stranger coloured, and her dark eyes flashed; then she said, laughingly, taking Achsah's hand in hers—"Forgive my presumption; I forgot you were a nation of princes," and after taking off her golden necklace, she threw it over Achsah's neck, and said, kissing her—"My name is Lucia; my father is called Nicias; every one knows him; we live in Jerusalem; will you come and see me sometimes?—I want a sister." And with an air between that of an empress and a wilful child, she descended the hill with her arm around the neck of her favourite.

The Hebrew children sate by the well; but to Azor all was changed. "Those heathens!" he exclaimed, adding other Oriental epithets less moderate, "they think they grant us a boon in permitting us to toil where our fathers reigned."

The shadows lay black on the rocky valley as they returned, and the feeble lamp glimmered faintly through the slit windows of the cottage. There sate the mother, patiently and peacefully

piecing old garments together. Achsah began to help her mother, while Azor stood moodily apart. The mother looked up—

"Those faggots you cut will provide us well for the winter, but they are scattered about unbound."

"I was not born to bind faggots, mother."

No reply; and Azor felt the silent industry an insult.

"When the ship sank, mother," he said, at length, "which carried my father's property, and we were wrecked, was nothing saved? Why cannot you have a house in Jerusalem?"

"Your father devotes what is left of our wealth to the national cause."

"What national cause, mother?" said the boy, impatiently drawing close to her. "We have come back to Palestine in twos and threes, until more than a million of us are here again mocking the prophecy of Roman and Christian that we were exiled for ever; but we are not a nation, we have no power."

"Power grows in secret, my son; your father says revolutions are prepared underground."

"But, mother, do *you* hope?"

She raised her pale face from her work, and clasping her hands, she said—"We have sinned, we and our fathers; gracious is our God and merciful, but He will by no means clear the guilty or exalt the proud. We have returned to our land, but have we returned to our God?"

"But do not the Rabbis say we have suffered double for our sins?" asked the boy, eagerly; "and will not God's anointed King come to us at our lowest?"

"It is said so," she replied. "I have an unbelieving, unhoping heart; but in my childhood the siege of Jerusalem was not forgotten. My father lived for this hope, and he was burnt with the Temple, still looking for the Deliverer amidst the flames, like the Three Children of old; my brothers fought for it—two of them were crucified, and three are slaves scattered I know not where; and now my husband and my children have caught its terrible light, the light which has led all I loved to ruin!"

"But the day must come, mother, and we may be the generation which shall see it!"

"*You*, my children!" she said, mournfully.

"Had you never a sister, mother?" asked Achsah, after a long silence.

"I had one," my daughter.

"Is she living?" Achsah inquired, timidly.

"She died thirty years ago."

"In the same hope, mother?"

"No, not in the *same* hope, Achsah. She died rejoicing; she believed the Promised One had come."

"The Messiah had come!" said Achsah, wonderingly.

"Hush, Achsah!" whispered Azor, "our mother means she was a Nazarene."

A heavy footstep was heard on the threshold; the children rushed to meet their father. The mother rose timidly, as if she had been opening a forbidden casket.

Eleazar threw himself on the bench nearest the door, and wiped his brow.

"You are weary," said the wife.

"No, Shelomith, not I; only my limbs. There is a rising of our people in the East, and the Romans have fallen back. The tidings are dim as yet, but surely the days of our mourning are ended, and my timid dove shall yet nestle among the palaces of David. I thought to have placed you there, Shelomith, in your youth and prime; but there is new youth for us yet. Our children shall have their birthright." Then closing the door, and encircling his wife and children in one embrace, he said, in a low, deep tone—"The Star of Jacob has arisen! The Messiah is come at last!" and tears rolled over his stern, sunburnt face, and the mother and children wept together in a tumult of joy.

But another emotion swelled the tide in Shelomith's heart. "*The Messiah is come!*"—these had been the last words on the lips of her dying sister.

A low cry from the room within caught her ear; and hastening to her youngest child, she found his face flushed and his lips quivering as with some uneasy dream, whilst outside she heard the howl of some wild animal. Tenderly she

laid him on her bosom, and carried him up and down until the flushed face was calm, and the quivering lips entranced into a smile. Then sitting down with her child on her knee, the hopes and fears of a faith which had become little more than political, and the sorrows of a nation to whose every-day life tragedy had become familiar, were all for a while absorbed in the deep content of a mother's love. For beneath the eddies and stormy waves of political change, ever flows the deep current of our common human life

CHAPTER II.

SLOWLY the train of the young Greek maiden wound its way back to the valley of the Kidron, the mule picking its way along the stony bed of the dry torrent. As they passed along, groups of men were seen talking eagerly in retired nooks, or creeping along the sides of the Mount of Olives; the black rocks of Moriah frowned above them, crowned by no temple, and among the stones left no longer "one on another," through one of the many breaches of the shattered walls, the party reached Jerusalem. Through streets of mingled houses and ruins—ruins of palaces and dwellings mostly of the poor—they reached at length the doors of a temple which might have been transplanted from Athens or Pompeii. It was not gorgeous with Oriental splendour; in the chaste colouring of the walls, the cool marble fountains, the sculpture, the vistas of harmonious colouring, ending in a court of flowers,—there was everything to satisfiy the eye, but nothing to dazzle it. The object seemed to be for the mind to rest on the beauty of the work, not to be bewildered by the

resources of the owner; not to excite men's vacant wonder, but to give a sense of repose and pleasure. There was, however, one distinction between the house of Nicias and an ordinary Roman villa. Within the inner court was a cool retreat, with walls and pillars of green polished marble, like a hall from the palace of Neptune, curtained from the court by clustering vines; and on the roof of this, ascended by stone stairs, were spread rich Persian carpets.

Over these stairs Lucia insisted on carrying or dragging the reluctant fawn into the presence of Martia, her mother—a stately Roman matron, who welcomed the captive with a very faint reflection of her daughter's enthusiasm. A stranger, the wife of an imperial officer, was on the couch beside Martia, and Lucia seated herself at their feet weaving garlands for her pet, which licked her fingers meanwhile, in a deprecatory way, as if it still associated garlands with sacrifices.

On the scent of lilies, and narcissuses, and fresh violets, the heart of the maiden wandered back to her own and her father's native Athens —where the temples were yet standing, and the gods of Greece yet worshipped; and the grave tones of the matrons, as they discussed their families, and slaves, and the chances of insurrection among the turbulent Jews, mingled with the maiden's dreams like the steady roll of the sea with the ringing music of its thousand eddies and cascades.

"Sunny land, when shall I see thee again? I remember the deep blue of thy seas, the life of thy streams. The sun loved thee, and tinged thy barest rocks with gold, and in the clefts of the mountains thousands of flowers welcomed him, and we welcomed thee, Apollo!—for wert thou not our own? Thy feet had trodden our plains, and on every hill was the impress of thy beauty, and in every valley the music of thy voice.

"Through the orange groves and the olives, and among the dark cypresses, gleamed the white robes of the living streams; and at night, Diana, they chanted hymns to thee, pure and loving, sweet sister of the strong hero! All was youth and life—starry heroes in the heavens, nymphs in the rustling forests, gods under the sea! Land of my fathers, home of the joyous gods, Elysium peopled by no shadows! they loved us all, for we loved them, my brothers and I. Many an hour we watched on the quiet beach, when the sunset had faded, to see but one of the Beautiful glide by on the crests of the dark waves. We knew they were below in the sea-palaces, in the green halls among the crimson coral, and the pearls, and the rosy shells.

"It was a joy to think of their rejoicings, and the moon rejoiced as we did, and came up and tinged the roofs of the sea-palaces with silver, and the happy immortals sent their waves to

our feet—prattling messengers, with gifts of the shells, pearly and green and rosy-lipped and golden, which had strewed their palace floors.

"It is a joy to think of it now; but my brothers are gone, they are in the shadowy fields of bliss, and here the hills are dark and barren, and the streams are dry. The gods have forgotten this land, their footsteps are not on these hills, and I have no playfellow but thee, my sacred white fawn."

And she threw her arms around the graceful creature's neck; the garlands dropped from her fingers, and she lay gazing on the stars, wrapt in her soft ideal world from all the stern griefs and truths around her.

A firm step was on the stone stair, and a hand laid on the child's head.

"What is my golden-haired nymph dreaming about?"

"Father, where have you been? You look weary."

"Drinking barbarous wine, with people who imagine that pomp is beauty, and making polite speeches to rebels who were, most probably, seasoning their feast with the pleasant hope of murdering us all."

"Do you mean that there are rumours of another insurrection among the Jews?" interposed Martia.

"I mean that the Jews labour under chronic insurrection; and the only question is, whether

the vessel or the fermented contents be the stronger."

"I do not like this country, father."

"Nor I, my daughter."

"Why do we not go back to Greece?"

"The Emperor holds the keys of Elysium, Lucia, and the way thither is seldom cheerful."

"Why do not the gods leave this desolate country to the Hebrews?"

"You had better propose the question at your next visit to the Temple."

"Father, there is nothing joyous here but the sun and the stars. I should like to be a priestess of Apollo. Is there not a temple at Antioch? Will you dedicate me?"

"Decidedly not."

"Why?"

"You had better ask your mother. In general, because, although the gods are, of course, the best society themselves, they do not always keep the best."

Lucia looked perplexed.

"What is your idea of the life of a priestess of Apollo, child?"

"To greet the god, morning and evening, with glorious hymns, to garland his statues, and feel them smile on me."

"And cut the throats of kids?"

"No, no; that is for the slaves. But why should blood be shed?"

"You are getting too Platonic, Lucia. I

really cannot tell; perhaps, because the temper of the gods was not understood to be as amiable as you think it—perhaps to satisfy a dread of vengeance which haunts the wicked—perhaps to supply the tables of the priests."

"But my worship shall be quite different. It should be all joy, and beauty, and praise—no death, or pain, or fear."

As they spoke, a young man had saluted Martia, and seated himself with a privileged air beside the father and daughter.

"Instruct this maiden, Cyril, and persuade her that there are better destinies than that of Iphigenia."

"My cousin seems intuitively to understand many mysteries," was the reply; "what is evil but the absence of good, and why should a pure soul know anything but joy?"

"Then, in your opinion, the unfortunate animals are slain in honour of nothing?" interposed Nicias.

"The lower the nature, the lower the food. Ideas cannot reach the multitude; they must be restrained by emotions, by terror, by hope, and remorse. There is a deep meaning in the popular rites."

"Oh, unquestionably! I attend all the processions, and offer at all the festivals, in my official capacity. Calms of Divine contemplation, meditations on a sublime, unqualified essence, which is only to be distinguished by vulgar eyes from

nothing, by the fact of its being something—I am aware this is not the religion which makes armies fight or mobs disperse; we cannot, of course, make one religion for the mob and the philosopher."

"Yet," said Cyril, thoughtfully, "there seems one religion which unites a belief of some sublimity with a political influence of tremendous power."

"You mean the Jewish."

"Has it not a wonderful hold on the nation? It binds together princes and craftsmen, it overcomes a passion for wealth and love of kindred as intense as exist anywhere, it nerves to torture, and survives slavery!"

"Yet, after all, what is it but a kind of deified patriotism?"

"It is someting more, for it survives national existence."

"Say, rather, renders national existence imperishable. After the terrible vengeance of Titus, they are returning from plenty and safety to the bare hills and desolate plains where their fathers were enslaved and crucified."

"Indeed, the land is full of them again. It is anything but a cheerful prospect for those in and under authority."

"I wish the sacred Emperor would leave building his temple in Greece and come to our aid, or we have a chance of a second temple in Jerusalem." Then, as if brushing off an annoy-

ing thought, Nicias recurred to the previous subject.

"The founder of that system deserves a niche among the sages."

"But I alluded to this *new* faith," resumed Cyril; "this sect, which seems applicable to the whole world, since it springs up everywhere, with sublimer ideas and intenser power than the earlier Judaism possessed, combining the idea of a Supreme Existence with the worship of a deified Hero."

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," laughed Nicias, unconsciously repeating words to which he knew not the answer. "I confess, if I were a slave, or perhaps a woman, I might receive this doctrine,—with modifications and an imperial indemnity; but I warn any of my household against a similar enthusiasm."

Cyril turned to Lucia—"Lucia has a more joyous mystery; she needs no such gloomy caverns of refuge for the soul; no such shadows shall cross her lot." She looked up in wonder, and met his eyes fixed on her with a gaze of strange deep tenderness.

Cyril left; and Nicias, taking his daughter's fair head between his hands, as she knelt by his side, said, with a mixture of affection and levity—

"I have three pieces of news for you, Martia —I have bought a Corinthian slave for our

daughter; I have betrothed her to Cyril; and another king of the Jews has arisen in the East."

Martia received the intelligence with much apparent composure.

Lucia hid her face in her mother's bosom, and wept as she did when her fawn was lost. "To leave you, mother, and my father?"

"Not yet, my child, not yet," said the mother. And her voice quivered, as in one vision her own girlhood rose before her — her house in Rome, and the gay childish voices, her two dead sons, her dreams over the infancy of her only daughter. And Lucia was soothed; and in her dreams that night mingled strangly dissolving views of temples full of life and joy, and beautiful godlike forms melting into shadows as she gazed —with the shadow of some unknown substance out of sight flung across the radiance, until she woke in the early morning, and found the fawn struggling to push aside the curtain of her little sleeping-cell, and the sun threw his light on her, and she rejoiced to feel she was still a child in her father's house.

"I am to have a real Greek slave, my beautiful Lily," she said, when they had mounted to their territory on the roof together; "not a dull Egyptian without soul, nor one on whom the shadow of this gloomy land has fallen; but one of ourselves, who knows all the old divine stories, and can tell us about the heroes, and the wars, and the heroic games."

But a new era was to commence for Lucia; and the stately forms and flitting fancies of her religion were to fade into pale dreams before the shrill voices of every-day occupation,—life and religion keeping each their distinct departments, and never interfering with each other more than night and day.

A beautiful dream-land, full of gods and heroes, men and fair women, and airy creatures for her imagination; a world, containing her father and mother, the fawn, and the slaves,—to live in these were Lucia's two worlds. Of a faith which would influence daily life she had no more idea than that the ebb and flow of the tides were governed by the sun and moon. Her ideal morality consisted in sundry stoic maxims, illustrated by the severe virtue of certain old Roman heroines who personified them, and in the grave matronly example of her mother; her practical morality flowed from a warm heart, exuberant health, and a sunny temper. So her life glided away like that of a bird in its summer woods, as beautiful, as joyous, as instinctive, and morally as unconscious. The beauty of the world and the love of her kindred flowed into her heart, and she loved and rejoiced; and if in her turn she gave back light and music, it was as the wandering brook, that thinks only of dancing on its way, and knows not that its play is sunshine, and its footsteps are a song. Two arts only she possessed, if anything can be termed

art which is as spontaneous as instinct. She could sing and weave garlands. Flowers were her canvas, pencil, and chisel. Early in the morning she sought them over hill and valley, and all day she sate and sang among them, weaving wreaths and crowns for feasts or for the temples, and never tiring of combining the lovely forms and rich colours, warbling the while improvised songs breathing of the brooks and hills as the flowers smelt of them.

CHAPTER III.

THE caravan had reached its last day's journey—a caravan, not of pilgrims, but of ordinary travellers, to whom Jerusalem was a market or a dwelling-place. For of the two people to whose hearts Jerusalem was a place of sacred memories, the Jew dared not testify his reverence; whilst to the Christian the stain of redeeming blood was on its hills, and from the soil where the Lamb was slain, the longing heart turned to the invisible Sanctuary, and the throne in the midst of which the beloved disciple had beheld Him. All was silence in the encampment.

The dawn gave as yet no sign; the outlines of the hills rose up black against the serene sky; all the wealth of colour in woods, and vineyards, and green hills, where the sheep fed, and the wavy purple outlines beyond, lay sleeping under the flood of moonlight.

One only was awake, and she sate at the door of one of the tents, as still as the stars she looked at.

It was Irene, the Greek slave. Among all

that multitude of sleepers, she had not one that belonged to her; and as her thoughts ranged over the world, among all the multitudes of sleepers there, she knew not one that would wake and think first of her. But there were multitudes in heaven who would need sleep no more, waking in the sight and praise of God, to whom she belonged. There was the spirit of a dead infant there, looking on the face of the Father, and there were martyrs and apostles, whose words were her daily joy.

Of these she thought; and there was One there who thought of her, looked on her, and loved her—to whom she belonged for ever, because He had purchased her at a great price, to be His own. Between her and the one family in earth and heaven, no close earthly relationship intervened; yet the innermost circle of the affections was no blank, for warm and close in her inmost heart dwelt the Church, and the Christ of God.

They were near Bethlehem. It was the first day of the week; and, like Magdalene of old, she stood in thought alone, by the sepulchre, while it was yet dark—but not weeping, for she knew where her Lord was. As she sate there, a presentiment of the morning began to thrill through nature; a fresher breeze awoke, the grass at her feet waved, from the trees near came a faint occasional murmur and a soft stirring of wings, a delicate rose-colour tinged the

brow of the highest mountains. God touched the earth with the tip of His golden sceptre, that she might draw near and prostrate herself, and make known her petition.

But, from below, Irene's ear caught another murmur, and the sound of song swelled and died on the morning air. She listened, and slowly followed the sound. As it grew clearer, her face brightened. Surely nothing so pure and sweet was ever sung to Apollo? A turn in the path made the words distinct.

It was the well-known "Hymn to Christ as God," which has throbbed through the heart of the Church, and poured forth in music from her lips from the beginning—the hymn which has at length, it is thought by some, become crystallised in the "Te Deum." Men and women sang responsively:—

"We praise Thee, O God: we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship Thee: the Father Everlasting.
To Thee all Angels cry aloud: the Heavens, and all the Powers therein.
To Thee Cherubim, and Seraphim: continually do cry,
Holy, Holy, Holy: Lord God of Sabaoth;
Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty: of Thy glory
The glorious company of the Apostles: praise Thee.
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets: praise Thee.
The noble army of Martys: praise Thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world: doth acknowledge Thee;

The Father: of an infinite Majesty;
Thine honourable, true: and only Son;
Also the Holy Ghost: the Comforter.
Thou art the King of Glory: O Christ.
Thou art the Everlasting Son: of the Father.
When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man: Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.
When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of Death: Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God: in the Glory of the Father!
We believe that Thou shalt come: to be our Judge.
We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants: whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood.
Make them to be numbered with Thy Saints: in glory everlasting.
O Lord, save Thy people: and bless Thine heritage.
Govern them: and lift them up for ever.
Day by day: we magnify Thee;
And we worship Thy name: ever world without end.
Vouchsafe, O Lord: to keep us this day without sin.
O Lord, have mercy upon us: have mercy upon us.
O Lord, let Thy mercy lighten upon us: as our trust is in Thee.
O Lord, in Thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded."

When the strains died away, she was kneeling on the rocks, her hands clasped, and tears of joy streaming over her face. Then rising, she entered the cave whence the sound issued, and bowing low, and making the sign of the cross, seated herself amongst the disciples. There was a momentary pause. Few in that little band were

above the rank of peasants and vine-dressers, and the ray of the one lamp lighted up many a face hardened by toil, and brightened by no human culture. But the thought which has renewed the face of the earth was there, and the love which made martyrs, and the faith which opens heaven. The president, a calm old man, in the dress of a Jewish rabbi, stept forward, and taking her hand, said—"Sister, you are welcome;" then, having placed her beside him, he signed for the service to proceed. A younger man took a precious manuscript from his bosom, and read, in Greek, the 24th chapter of Luke, pausing every now and then, whilst the president translated the passage into Syriac; then after a brief silence, a peasant arose, and repeated, in a deep, heart-stirring voice, the Psalm—"God is our refuge and strength," and with the words, "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge," sat down again. Another quiet pause; then the president arose, standing with the whole of those present, and offered a thanksgiving and prayer, every voice joining, from time to time, in a soft response, or an Amen of hearty agreement—"Verily, verily, Lord Christ, so let it be!" and with a benediction, and a presentation of some offering, the simple, joyful service closed. The men and women gathered around Irene, questioning her, and murmurs of compassion passed from one to another. "A Greek, and a slave!—not always a slave, poor

lady, one can easily see!" And from some, with whom pity was no mere passive luxury—"Are the offerings all expended?—to relieve any present distress! Perhaps in Jerusalem they might find the ransom."

But Irene smiled a refusal to all such benevolent projects. She was content to be a slave, content that God should direct where. The ransom might be bestowed on some whom it might restore to a home;—she had none. Was she not free in Christ? Could she not be content to serve where He had washed the feet of His disciples?—to be poor, where He was born in a manger? And gently disengaging herself from their sympathy, she returned to the camp before the preparations for starting were completed.

One loving face looked after her, that of a woman, leading a young boy by the hand.

"Motherless, fatherless, childless, and a slave!" she murmured. "And I thought myself desolate, because God took my baby to Himself;" and laying her boy's hand in that of her husband—the young man who had read from the Gospels—the three returned together, and gave thanks for each other. Was it not worth while to dwell for a while in shadow, thus to bring out into consciousness the joy of others—to tighten the clasp of domestic love, and shame dull endurance into thanksgiving? especially as the shadows only lay on Irene's life, whilst her

heart soared, like the lark into the sunshine; for, among all who trod that last day's journey to Jerusalem, none had so bright a hope, or so full and free a heart as she.

Lucia sate late that evening on the roof, watching for the arrival of the new Greek slave. The house stood at an angle of the city, the builders having availed themselves in part of the old foundations. Around lay a heterogeneous mass of houses, scattered in gardens, or rising along the line of the old streets; broken columns, huge stones scattered here and there, ruins robbed of their dignity by the intrusion of squalid hovels or light Grecian dwellings; beneath, in abrupt descent, the deep shadows of the valley of Hinnom, the darkness of the hollow not now made more terrible by sepulchral fires. Beyond rose the solemn forms of the hills, not opening from Lucia's point of view into those distant glimpses which lead the fancy to fairy-land, or the heart to heaven, but towering in frigid silent guard on high. What wonder if to Lucia they seemed rather like sentinels of a prison than guardians of a home! Not a sign of any but Pagan worship met her eye. The site of the Temple lay bare, save for some sacred fragments, and the shrubs which sprang from their crevices; the dwelling in which the Christians met was unmarked from any other. To Lucia, Jerusalem had no sacred past; what wonder that it seemed to her the gloomy sepulchre of a gloomy faith?

Now and then a snatch of song, in some rich southern voice, broke the silence, or the deep bay of some moon-struck dog, till at length the quiet lay on her like a heavy weight, and she retired to her little sleeping-cell. The flowers with which she had garlanded it that morning hung drooping from the walls, the lamp burned faintly in its niche, and she was beginning to despair of any arrival that night, when the tread of many feet echoed through the narrow street. Lucia stood at the door of her sleeping-room and watched Irene's reception. Her first feeling was disappointment. The slight figure in the travel-stained dress, the face also worn and travel-marked by the journey of life, had little to attract. There is no promise to the spiritual Israel, that the wilderness, with its storms and roughness, shall not wear the vesture of the soul. And on Irene's face it could be seen that, in whatever time, she had travelled far. But as Lucia watched, disappointment changed to respectful compassion. There was a history in the hollowing of the cheek's round outline—a pathos in the calm of the dark eyes; the form still retained something of the grace of youth, and there was as much dignity, Lucia thought, in its elastic movements as in the stately erect repose of her mother, whose directions Irene was waiting. Therefore, when Lucia left her doorway, there was a gentleness in the tone of her welcome which went at once to the heart of the

slave, and brought a look into her eyes which raised again Lucia's hopes of congenial companionship. Before Irene's supper was finished, a quiet intimacy was established between her and her young mistress; and as Lucia led her into the room they were to share, she said—

"You are my countrywoman, and I mean to love you like a sister; and see, I have laid these garlands in water for you—to-morrow early we will arise and offer them on Apollo's altar, in honour of your safe arrival—or Diana's—perhaps you would like that better," she added, noting the change on Irene's face. "You are more like her; there seem to be night and moonlight in your face. I am sure we shall like each other; we will be night and morning."

Full of consideration for Irene, and her own joyous prospects, the maiden lay down to sleep.

She thought she had slept long when she awoke, and in the light of the lamp saw the kneeling form of the slave. There was a charm about her upturned face, and Lucia lay still and watched. There was no night in Irene's face now; Lucia could have fancied the roof had opened—her brow seemed so to beam. The light of the morning appeared shining on the slave; devotion, submission, joy, love, hope, an ecstacy of love and tenderness transfigured the countenance which had been marred with many sorrows; soft broken words escaped from her

parted lips. It was the first time Lucia had witnessed Prayer; and she awoke with a feeling as if she had seen the heavens opened in a vision, and wondered to see the placid, quiet face of the sleeper beside her. But she did not break her slumbers, and the offerings for Apollo were forgotten. Had they been remembered in Irene's prayers?

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning, as Martia and Nicias were debating family questions together, Irene entered, and meekly folding her arms on her breast, entreated to be allowed to say something. Her face was very pale, and the compressed lips and slight figure had the expression of one prepared to endure a severe sentence.

Nicias looked uneasy, as if he anticipated a scene, and was determined to evade it.

"Say anything you please."

"I wish only, my lord, to say, I am a Christian."

Nicias' countenance brightened, and, smiling, he replied—

"By all means, fair Corinthian. I dare say you could not find a more agreeable doctrine; similarly situated, I do not know that I myself could have chosen better."

Irene coloured, and glanced quickly at him, but there was no irony in his tone or manner.

"But," she replied, "I mean I cannot offer in the temples, nor share in any of your religious ceremonies."

"Do not disquiet yourself; some one can always be found to accompany Lucia, and, as a household, I think we do enough for the gods."

Still Irene did not retire.

"But we," she said, "believe that our religion is a blessed message for *all;* we would have all acknowledge our Lord, and enter the heaven He has purchased for us."

"You are very generous," replied Nicias; "but your heaven might not suit the tastes of all; the way to it certainly does not."

"Ah, my lord! if you knew Him who takes us there!"

"I have heard his history," he said, not without reverence; "he did not find an easy way for himself."

The tears flowed fast from Irene's downcast eyelids, and she murmured—

"*He did not.* He saved others; himself he *did not* save."

There was a pause.

Martia looked up from her embroidery, and said to Nicias, in a low troubled voice—"What if she talks in this way to Lucia?"

Nicias did not answer for a moment, and then he asked the slave—

"Is that what you mean?"

"It is; I cannot conceal my treasure of faith from her."

"Well, do as you like," he replied, with a

laughing courtesy; "meantime I will tell Lucia not to believe a word of it, and for the rest —let your Cross, and Apollo's garland and glorious statues, fight their own battles."

"Mother," asked Lucia, a few days after this, "what is Christianity?"

"I really know very little about it," Martia replied with studied indifference; "there is no end to the fancies and extravagancies one's slaves set up in these days for religion. It is a low kind of fanaticism, I imagine, which confounds all distinctions of class, and is, of course, popular enough in the workshop and the slave-market."

"Do none embrace it but slaves?"

"I have heard of some of our rank who have been deluded, and have actually eaten at the same table with their menial servants. Some people have a natural taste for singularity, you know. There are indeed much worse reports than this of the matter; but, altogether, dear, it is a subject not worth your thinking about."

Lucia was silenced for the time, and her next inquiry was of her father.

"The Christians? A very well-meaning set of people, I believe—but, for the most part, ignorant and narrow-minded, full of gloomy Jewish prejudices; on the whole, harmless enough, if they were not so bigoted, and so severe on all who differ from them. They amiably consign the whole of the human race, except

the favoured few who belong to them, to eternal fire—a soothing belief, to which, as long as they have no power to kindle it, they are, as far as I am concerned, quite welcome."

From time to time, when Nicias met Irene, he would ask laughingly—

"How goes the battle between the sun und the shade?"

But Martia knew more of the heart of woman, and how the deepest love is ever nurtured by sacrifice and sorrow, and she watched the slave with cold, suspicious eyes from that day forward.

Nicias seemed justified in his confidence. Lucia listened to the history of Jesus, and told her own faith and fancies, and seemed equally entertained with both. Sometimes she would say—"That is a beautiful story; tell me again about the dead brother who was restored to the two sisters!"—or, "I should like to have seen the angels in shining garments; if they ever come now, it would be worth while to try to get one glimpse of them. I am glad something bright has happened in this dark land." Sometimes she would even lay down her garlands, and listen silently, whilst the tears fell over her face, and as Irene began to hope her heart was reached, she would scatter all such hopes by saying cheerfully—"It is delicious to weep over such sorrows, now they have ended so brightly; but dear, gentle Irene, I am sure you do not

believe those gloomy things of which my mother spoke, your religion seems so full of love, and you are so ready to serve every one."

Once Lucia went so far as to say—"I think your God might have a place in our heavens;" but Irene's whole nature seemed so to shudder at the proposal, conciliatory as she meant it to be, that she never repeated it. For, to Irene, Lucia's Elysium was no other than hell, and her gods no graceful shadows or beautiful images, but veritable malignant demons.

"One thing I do not like in your religion," Lucia said, one day; "it is so domineering; you will have your God alone in his heavens—ours are so much fuller."

Irene looked up. "Does not this one sun fill the world with light? Yet, from the beginning, God was never alone—love is eternal. From the beginning, the Son dwelt in the bosom of the Father. Our heavens, indeed, are not full yet," she added, tenderly; "yet there is room, Lucia. Hereafter they will be full; thousands and ten thousands of angels, and a great multitude which no man can number, white, radiant, and rejoicing."

"I do not like that perpetual white," was the reply. They were in a valley full of flowers, and Lucia opened her robe, and displayed her gathered treasures; gold and purple and white, with starry golden stamens; cups and bells, and open palms, and delicate dew-vases, and rich

plumes, veiling their light in thick green leaves, or royally canopied beneath them, or cradled in leafy nests. "These are the pictures of my God," she said; "your heavens are too colourless; your garden is all lilies."

"Mine may be, Lucia," was the gentle reply. "To the sinful, the mere thought of purity is so blessed! But God's heaven is radiant beyond your thought or mine; rainbows, and crystals, and sapphires, and rubies, paint it not. God bathes the hills at sunrise, covers the valleys with flowers, colours shells which the waves break in myriads or hide in the depths with tints rich enough for a shrine, and His heaven will be no monotony."

"You speak so much of sin and purity; have you done very wrong things, Irene?"

"I have been forgiven much," was the reply.

"But I have not done wrong things," said Lucia, naïvely. "I have always been happy; therefore I do not need those sacrifices you speak of. My offerings are all beautiful, not painful; flowers and libations are my sacrifices; and I need no God but those who rejoice and reign in Olympus, and send blessings on earth. If one has come from among the blessed, and lived, as you say, in poverty, and died in agony, to comfort those who have erred and suffered, it must be good news to those who mourn; and I think it was godlike thus to love and suffer. But these messages are not for me; the old gods

are enough—I am happy—I need not this new faith;" and flinging the wreath she had been weaving around the neck of the fawn, which was browsing near, she bounded away with her captive. "Which is *true?*" was a question that never seemed to occur to her.

But Irene's heart was heavy; this impenetrable happiness—how could the voice of mercy reach the heart thus folded in love and joy!

"At least," she thought, "the message must come to this child through other lips than mine—through a voice not thinned as mine by years and sorrows." And in her evening prayer she murmured—"Father, what can I ask for this happy one, who knows not that she has need of Thee? Must it be that sorrow lay waste the heart, to make the silence in which Thy voice can be heard? Thou knowest, and Thou lovest; deal gently with the child for Thy Son's sake." She knew only the way by which she had been led; but God has a fresh path and a fresh experience for every soul—so alike, that all can learn from each, and each sympathise with all—so different that none can prophesy.

Lucia's cup of earthly joy was not yet full; the days of betrothal came to a close. Irene dressed her in the glistening white robes, and clasped the jewelled bracelets around her fair arms, and saw her stand radiant in beauty, without a shadow on her face, all of earth and for earth, like the flowers which crowned her golden

hair. She watched anxiously, also, the face of Cyril; it was so different—the deep lines of thought, which the joy of the hour could not efface—the eyes, in which all the light which beamed from them now could not veil the depth of the gaze which had looked beyond the present and visible.

"He will be her god," Irene thought; "what will she be to him?"

The bridal festival passed; garlands, and feasting, and song, and the brilliant procession leading the young bride to the house of her husband, but consecrated by no heavenly meaning; no divine Redeemer was at their feast. Lucia felt no need of redemption; she was full, and had need of nothing; and in her new home the overflowing joy of her heart gushed up to heaven in a thousand jets of song and thanksgiving. Yet she was not the same—a new deep love possessed her heart; and as she sat weaving her flower-pictures, or moved among her maidens, she would often fall into long silences—the garlands would drop from her hands, whilst she sate among them, her eyes moistened with happy tears. A deep calm seemed to have fallen on her being. Before, her life had been ideal—her worship a worship of Nature, steeped in the light of her own happy fancies; now it was human—the gods and Elysium seemed to vanish altogether, and she found a new Paradise in her new home. What hope could Irene see

of Lucia being led to the crucified Saviour now? If Fancy had filled her life so full, what room would Love leave?

Cyril seemed, however, interested in Irene's conversation; he would ask her many questions, and listen with earnest attention. "The history," he would say, "is beautiful; and I suppose all popular religions must have a history. The truths, also, are deep—making allowance, of course, for some Orientalisms. The Hebrew mind is not, I suppose, capable of an abstract faith."

But Irene once ventured to ask—"Do your abstract ideas give peace to your soul?"

"Peace," he said, "is for the babe, and the Supreme Existence; how can man, tossed by the winds of passion on the waves of circumstance, aspire to it? Life for the wise is a strife and an aspiration. Can your religion calm the tempests within and without?"

"Our GOD can," she replied; "and our faith leads us at once and continually to Him."

"Your religion is too human," he said—"too full of hopes and fears, and affections and emotions. The Supreme needs us not. He should be worshipped in a serene calm of contemplation, and not with tears and prayers."

"But are we not human—do we not need Him?"

"The heavens heed not the roaring of the ocean," he said.

"But God heeds the cry of the tempest-tossed," she said. "Oh, if my lord would but try!"

He did not reply, but Irene thought there was more of pity than of conviction in his silence. To Cyril, sin was indeed a reality; but he felt and saw it as a disease—as a terrible necessity, as the storms or pestilence incident to this lower world.

The husband mailed in his philosophic thought, the wife wrapt in her love and happiness,—Irene's heart sank, and she almost yielded in hopelessness to Lucia's words—"This religion is only good for those who suffer." She dared not ask for the baptism with which she had been baptized, but she prayed for their conversion, and trembled.

Yet another joy was given to Lucia.

She sate again, as in the old days, on the roof of her father's house; but the fawn was not there; it had fled, and was ranging the hills with its companions; the flowers were strewn on the floor. Lucia had been singing, but gradually her voice had sunk softer and lower, till, from a faint warble it had died into silence, and she sate gazing on the babe on her knee.

"Come and look at her, Irene," she murmured, softly; "see how beautiful she looks. Was there ever anything so lovely as her face, with that smile on it? Her last look was on me, and the last sound she heard was my voice. See

how happy she is in her sleep; but, oh! Irene, you do not know this joy."

"I did know it," was the reply, so quiet, yet it sounded like a burst of tears. Lucia laid her hand caressingly on that of Irene.

"You have lost a child, Irene?"

"God was merciful to me," she answered, still endeavouring to restrain her tears; "mine was only the mariage of a slave, and such as our religion forbids; but I was not strong enough to tear myself from my child, and so the temptation was taken out of the way. God took the child."

"You say God took it, Irene?" said Lucia, very earnestly.

"Jesus took the little ones in His arms and blessed them," was the reply, "and He has taken mine."

"It will be happy with Him," said Lucia, gently.

Irene looked up wonderingly.

"I have thought much during these last few months, Irene. I felt I could not speak to any of our gods about my darling, but I *could* to your CHRIST; and, Irene, I feel sure He has heard me. The God who was a little child—the God who took the babes in His arms and blessed them—who died for His enemies, and remembered His mother on the cross,—Oh! Irene, I believe it all! It is so blessed, it must be true! Your Christ is my God and my child's."

Now Irene's tears flowed without restraint; she bent over Lucia's hand and pressed it to her heart, and covered it with kisses, and sobbed like a child. Lucia's tears mingled with Irene's. "To think," she said, "that I should have been ungrateful to Him, and have refused to come to God when He was calling me, and had so loved me! Oh, Irene, I know now what you meant by sin; *that was sin.* But He came, you said, to save sinners."

No sorrow had come to Lucia—God had dealt very gently with her. Blessing had been heaped on blessing; and at length the child had looked up and recognised the hand of the Father. The deep mother's love, finding no response in her cold faith, had flowed back to its fountain, and, from learning to love, she had learned to love God. She had yet much to learn, but where shall secrets be unfolded if not at the Cross?

CHAPTER V.

LUCIA had awaked to the love of God in a world that had not laid aside the outer forms of its enmity against Him; necessarily the change was, in her own little circle, a very perceptible one.

"I always cautioned you," said Martia to her husband, "against that Corinthian."

"You understood your sex better than I did, my love, undoubtedly. But now what can we do? Lucia is so frank and earnest, we can never conceal this plague-spot in our house."

"I would banish every Christian in the empire amongst the remotest barbarians."

"But that being only a pious wish, what can we do in the mean time? We cannot banish Lucia."

Martia looked as if the thought were sacrilege.

"You are against that, I suppose. Then, shall we all follow her example? I hate divisions in a family, especially religious differences."

"The arena and the cross are no comedies, Nicias."

"We Greeks never thought so, my friend; but your imperial populace seems to enjoy them."

"Are you incapable of a serious thought?"

"There is the misfortune, Martia; we never can understand each other. I am perfectly serious. I mean quite honestly, that were the Emperor more favourable and the populace less insane, there is no religion I should prefer to the Christian; with one or two exceptions, it seems to me most sensible; a few peculiarities, of course, there are, a few provincialisms; but once introduce it among the higher classes, I am persuaded these eccentricities would soon become quite mild and respectable. You would banish the Christians—I would make senators and prætorians of them, and become one myself."

"But now, Nicias?"

"Now it is quite a different case. I do not think it at all discreet and sensible to run such unpleasant risks as you have mentioned; and am much perplexed that Lucia does not take the same view. If I had my way, without any unkind intentions, I would make Irene safe in the Mamertine prison, and leave Lucia to her own good sense,—strictly prohibiting, of course, any outward demonstrations."

"Now you talk like a wise man. Counsel Cyril."

"I have done so; but Cyril is beyond my control. He says Lucia's faith has taken such root in her heart, that it is beyond our reach—that

we might break her heart, but not uproot her religion."

"I know it, I believe it. It must be magic, this terrible power. Shall we try counter incantations? I know an old woman"——

"And I know many, my love; but I decline any such mediation with the immortals."

"Misfortune has fallen upon our house," said Martia bitterly. "May it recoil on the head of the adder which has stung our darling! The Fates must advance, let us meet them and perish." And pressing her hands a moment on her heart, she rose and went calmly about her daily duties,—no better hope than this in all her heavens, no heart to which she could pour out her sorrows. The mother looked up and around in her agonising apprehensions; and her eye met nothing but Nature, with its infantine gladness and inhuman desolations, its calm rotations, its fierce convulsions, its whirlwinds, and its flowers. Before her troubled gaze the dancing hours and the seasons poured forth their garlands and their sunshine;—yet surely not for her, for her sorrow cast not a shade on the rosy, joyous, unfading forms. On her anxious ear came the groans of shipwrecked men, and the shrieks of travellers buried in the sand-wastes, and the wailing of sacked cities. "What heart in heaven could her feeble cries touch?"

Nature rejoiced, men struggled and perished, the good suffered, the wicked triumphed, the

Olympians feasted, and over all lay the shadow of a gigantic, shapeless Destiny, crushing generation after generation. The chariot of Destiny had no charioteer, the horses had no rider, the ship was pilotless;—the machine of the universe was, after all, mightier than its Maker; and the ultimate appeal of gods and men lay to a brute, pitiless, irresistible force. Wiser and stronger hearts than Martia's had discovered the bitter secret before; and, with the thought that not a barrier remained between her only child and the death of a criminal, she set about her daily occupations. What wonder that her very tenderness made her stern—that her tears, frozen in that icy air, were pent back, and formed ice around her heart!

"Il pianto stesso il pianger non lascia."

Indolence would have made Nicias persecute, and tenderness Martia. In thinking of the sufferings of the early Christians, we have to remember that the persecutors were not all Neros. Order, national unity, domestic attachments, patriotism, the noblest and the tenderest feelings of our nature, must often have been arrayed against them—so many of the worst crimes are perpetrated blindfold. What need, then, of watchfulness against the first film which passion and prejudice weave over the mind!

Meantime, therefore, Lucia was permitted to receive instruction among the catechumens, pre-

paratory to baptism, and by this means she became acquainted with many of the Christians in the city. At first, her reception was cordial, as of a noble child given to the household of faith; but occasionally she heard discussions, and received advice which perplexed her. Some philosophising interpretations brought occasional trouble to the good bishop; but for the most part, the differences in that Christian synagogue had another source. Once, an Ebionite arose among them, and denied the whole mystery of the incarnation—declaring that the appearing of the Christ was when the voice from heaven proclaimed and the Spirit descended on Him at His baptism; but the few who followed him soon separated themselves, and ultimately joined the false Messiah.

But the tendencies which such developments proved existed in various forms amongst them:—Mysticism, pronouncing many things common and unclean which God had sanctified; Pharisaism, making of God's special gifts barriers between man and man, instead of channels of blessings. One matron wondered at Lucia's ornaments and graceful Grecian dress; another gave her exhortations about the orthodox way of preparing her food; a third thought her deficient in zeal for the conversion of her husband; and altogether they instilled so many small scruples into her mind, that the freshness of her Christian life was in danger of being

checked in its infancy,—until she obtained possession of a copy of the Epistle to the Romans, and occupied herself in copying it. There was one person in the church of whom she had no fear—the earnest old man, with a grave serenity of countenance, who was at the head of it. They seemed to understand each other; he perplexed her with few rules, and she felt confident as a child in coming to him with all her perplexities. One morning she came to him with a face so joyous, that he asked her what glad tidings she had received.

"Only the old gospel, father," she said. "I shall not need to trouble you with any more perplexities; I have found two rules which will fit everything."

"What golden rules are they, my daughter?"

"St. Paul says," she replied, "that we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and that love is the fulfilling of the law."

"And how will you fit these to everything?" he asked.

"Every day," she said, looking up to him with her earnest child-like gaze, "I will ask God to clothe my soul with Him, and I am sure everything wrong will fall off in that presence; and every time I am in perplexity, I will ask Him to fill my heart with love; and, father, shall I not be sure to see?"

"'If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light,'" said the bishop; but

he seemed to be exorting himself as much as Lucia.

One evening, as Cyril was deep in the study of some old Greek manuscripts, Lucia came up to him, and with a face radiant with the pleasure she meant to give, and the good she hoped to do, presented him with a great roll, containing the Epistles of St. Paul and the Gospel of St. John.

"Will you read them for my sake, Cyril?"

He looked affectionately at her, and carelessly at the manuscript.

"I have read it already, wife."

Her face was shadowed.

"But you will read it again, and think if it is not the very truth."

He promised, in the tone of concession to a petted child, but he read the volume. Lucia watched discreetly a long time before she ventured on an inquiry on the subject, always hoping that he would commence. But he said nothing.

"Have you read the book?" she asked, at length.

"I have."

"And you are convinced?"

"I think Paul of Tarsus was a man of wonderful genius and noble character."

"But the doctrine?"

"I think it the most perfect philosophy which can be veiled in a historical form."

Lucia looked sorely perplexed; she had hunted through Jerusalem to find the volume, and sold all her jewels to buy it. She had prayed night and day that the blessed truths might reach his heart, and this was the result—he called it a good kind of philosophy.

"Oh, Cyril," she said, with much vexation, "it is no philosophy, it is the truth!"

He smiled, she was so illogical.

"But if it is good, Cyril, why not receive it?"

"To believe a religion the best possible for the common people is one thing—to call clowns, mechanics, and slaves my brothers and sisters, is another," he said, proudly. "Leave controversy to the rabbis and sophists, wife," he continued, "it is too hard for your delicate fingers."

"Cyril, I am no child," she said, in rather an injured tone.

"Certainly not, you are the best little wife man ever had; the only fault I find in your religion is, that it will not let people alone. What you began to believe yesterday, you cannot rest if all the world do not believe to-day."

She smiled through her tears, and said to herself—"It is true; I will have patience." Then sitting down beside him, with her child playing at her feet, she watched him in silence. At first, bitter thoughts were in her mind, she had hoped so much. Then, as she gazed on his

thoughtful face, bent in absorbing study, she mused—

"How could I think I could lead him—he so wise, I such a child! Yes, O God! a child indeed; but oh! make *him* as one of these little ones, that he may learn of Thee;" and taking her child in her arms, she felt that she also was cared for, and carried as a lamb in his bosom.

CHAPTER VI.

LUCIA had little idea, scarcely more than her babe, in what a world of fierce strife and storms her little home-circle was set. Rome in its height of power, like a wave at its fullest swell: who could tell that the very soaring crest of its pride was the sign of its breaking? Trajan's conquests had indeed been a little narrowed by Adrian—a wise act of consolidation, perhaps only the recoil before the spring. On some of the frontiers walls had been built, on others bridges had been destroyed, to prevent the incursions of the barbarians; but what was there to indicate that these preparations were other than the wise repose of a satisfied conqueror,—that in the East the empire was rapidly becoming a besieged city,—that the barbarians in the North were different from those who had been kept within their own limits on the East and South? The terrible meaning of the name of Goth had yet to be learned, and the might of a race which defeat could only teach to conquer.

With the power of action, the Greeks seem to have lost energy of thought. Intellect, divorced

from those active duties which are at once its spur and rein, wandered aimlessly hither and thither,—lost in transcendental speculation, or intently employed in spinning cobwebs to entangle itself. With the hills and the sea around them, the skies and the green flowery earth, human life and love,—they only ventured to see as others had seen, and admire what others had pointed out. Placing the glory of their old literature between them and nature, instead of facing it,—inserting the mirror into the window-frame, they lost the view outside, and saw in the mirror only an image of themselves. Thus, to restore mankind to genuine thought, it became necessary to cast aside the races, and bury the art and science of the ancient world, that the nations might pass through the rough discipline of a second boyhood, and come at length to the old long-lost fountain with a genuine thirst.

The weight of the glory of the ancient Greeks lay on their enfeebled successors like a burden. Their strength was exhausted in girding on the old armour; still imagining themselves the wisest and most gifted of men, the only critics of beauty and of truth, their eyes were losing clearness, and their ears discrimination; and whilst they hung on the last new subtlety of the last new sophist as on the breath of eternal wisdom, the Apostle of the nations, preaching to them Jesus and the resurrection, seemed to them a "babbler."

The Jewish nation still struggled to raise its head and regain its old sceptre, not knowing that a curse hung around it, and that the fable of the "Wandering Jew" pictured but too truly its immortality of restless exile; and in the midst of these falling, fallen, and doomed nations, Christianity, born from above, took root and grew—a principle of life in every sense—intellectual, moral, spiritual life to those who received it; even to the world that rejected it, the preservation from decay; the life of the Church, the salt of the earth. Christianity—or rather the Church—not a mere system revealed from above, but men, poor sinful men (with the taint of the corrupt age on them), born from above; one by one brought into direct communication with God, believing Him, regenerated by Him, commissioned by Him to go forth with a message of peace to all: poor men, for the most part (though in no age could the Church have been without its scribes as well as its fishermen), with a narrow range of thought, until they received that faith, which extended their vision over all national barriers to the human race, and through all mists of ignorance to the throne of God; like Lucia and Irene, knowing little of what wise men had thought, or learned men had discovered, but knowing that the Son of God had been made flesh, and had dwelt among men; that He had redeemed them from sin and hopelessness, and that He was to re-

turn: and for this faith they were ready to die.

In Jerusalem there had existed a church since the days when the apostles and elders resided there,—scattered, indeed, to the mountains, when the city had been encompassed with armies, but returning with fond recollection to the streets where Jesus had taught, and His first martyr had died.

In many respects they retained Jewish customs, hoping, perhaps, thereby to win their brethren after the flesh; perhaps also still fettered by the national association of more than a thousand years. Their bishops all bore Jewish names. Doubtless they received Gentiles gladly, and probably did not insist on the Jewish yoke being laid on them; but their hearts yearned affectionately over the fallen and scattered nation, so long the chosen of God. The Jews, on the other hand, looked hopefully on many of these Christians; and in times of insurrection seemed to have relied on the national bond proving stronger than the religious.

During the months whose course had brought so many changes to Lucia, the lodge in the vineyard above the Kedron valley had become a place of much importance. Midnight conferences had been held there; the vines and maize had been left to the care of Achsah and Shelomith, whilst Azor and Eleazar had devoted themselves to the more congenial occupation of keep-

ing up communication with the various bands of insurgents, and feeding the flame of discontent with the wild hopes of a Deliverer at hand.

The mother and her little Benoni, with Achsah, were seated in front of the lodge. The vineyard bore traces of disorder, and the ground was trodden hard, as if by many feet. Eleazar was wandering about, uneasily watching for the return of Azor. It was already dusk before the sound of a horse's feet, advancing rapidly, reechoed through the rocky valley. In those days of secret plotting, Shelomith's heart trembled at the clatter of the hoofs in the silent place.

"Could you not have come on foot?" she said, as her son dismounted, and hastened towards her. "It would seem strange your arriving so late, at such a terrific pace, at this lonely spot."

"Seem strange to whom, dear mother?" was the laughing reply; "surely the goats and eagles are no traitors. Besides," he added, respectfully saluting his father; "our days of underground plotting are nearly over; we are no longer a confederacy—we are a nation."

"What news to prove that?" asked Eleazar, shortly; "dreams do not vanquish empires,—nor do epigrams."

"Five more fortresses are in our hands, father. The Romans have massacred women and children, but dare not attack us in the open field. They have sent for reinforcements; and

the Emperor has been compelled, for once, to be honest, and tell the dismal truth to the Senate. They say he has sent home polite 'hopes that with Rome and the Senate all is well,' but has omitted the comfortable formula—'With me and the army all is well.'"

Eleazar took one or two turns, and then resumed, in no very sanguine tone—

"The substance of which is—that many of our people have been slain, and that the Emperor, in order to secure effective succours, has sent an alarming message to the Senate. I do not see how that mends matters."

"But the Emperor's decree has roused the whole nation, father; it is proclaimed everywhere that not one of our sacred rites or feasts is to be observed, and that to read or explain our law is death."

"I thank the Romans for that," replied Eleazar. "Despair is a firm ally."

"But, the Messiah, father?" asked Achsah, timidly, fixing her eyes intently on his face. "Is not the Messiah with us; and if God is with us, can there be any fear?"

Eleazar's brow contracted, and there was little enthusiasm in his tone with which he replied—

"There must be victory with God's Anointed, child; but we have many sins upon us, and I sometimes think we have scarcely yet drunk to the dregs the cup of wrath."

"Oh, father!" she replied, "is not the siege

of Jerusalem, and the captivity which followed it, enough? And," she continued, eagerly, "did not the Lord always have mercy on our people when they cried unto Him?"

"When they repented, and turned to Him, child."

"But have not we suffered and repented? We do not worship the gods of the heathen now, father?"

"No, child," he replied, sadly; "but we seem to worship ourselves, and I am not sure if that is not worse."

"Oh, father, you do not worship yourself!" said Achsah, flushing eagerly in her father's defence; "have not you given up everything?"

He stroked her face fondly, and turning to Azor, said—

"What message did you bring?"

"The rabbis thanked you for the money; they said it was life-blood to the cause, and they trusted you would have your reward; and as to what you said about applying part of it to rebuilding the temple, they thought it was a most pious purpose, and should be attended to, if possible. And, father," he continued, "I saw the King himself, and he is coming through our valley to-morrow."

"The King!" exclaimed Achsah, turning deadly pale with emotion. "And he spoke to you?"

"He offered me the command of a company

of men, to storm a highland fortress in the south," replied Azor, eagerly; "and, father, may I accept it?"

"Surely; why should my son be withheld?" said the old man; but there was some bitterness in his tone, and he added—"Young blood is worth more than aged counsel."

But Azor heeded not his words, full of his new military power, and of plans for his exploit. And Achsah heard him not. She sate pale and speechless. "Could it be possible that to-morrow they would see the King?"

She could not sleep one moment that night—strange bewildering thoughts chased each other through her brain—old prophecies, and sacred histories heard in the synagogue, or from her mother's lips;—psalms about an Anointed One, girded with truth, and riding forth in majesty, and of glory heaped on the head of One who was to come—the Prince of peace, the Captain of the Lord's host, the son of David, the root of Jesse, the star of Jacob, God's King, the Messiah; and then, jarring against all this, "money the life-blood of the cause"—and Azor seeming to look on it all as an ordinary war! She wondered if it was her ignorance and childishness that made her feel differently;—if Joshua, and Moses, and David had, after all, no different feeling from Azor; and if the battles of the Lord in old times were like any other battles, and the heroes of her people like all the rest of

the world, if you came close. Then came visions of hosts passing through seas and rivers on dry land,—of an army going forth to battle with unarmed priests before them, singing praises;—of victories won, and hosts slain without a blow struck by human hand;—of a city falling before the holy ark; and then followed other scenes of that very ark leading that very people, in their impiety, to ruin, and the dying wail ran through her heart—"Ichabod! Ichabod! The glory is departed,"—till, terrified at her own thoughts, she arose and prayed. But to whom could she pray? To the Unutterable — the God that hideth Himself;—yet the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel. The God of Israel?—the God who had sent her people into captivity—who had let His holy city perish, and His temple be burned up? How could she know if He would hear—if she were not crying to One whose face was turned away in deadly wrath? Yet why all these fears now? To-morrow,—to-morrow was not the Deliverer to come?—she could scarcely bring her lips to utter in prayer the words—Thine Anointed; and yet, if what all believed were true, was it not far worse impiety to doubt? So she dressed early, and, after preparing the meal she could not touch, planted herself on a rock, from which she commanded several reaches of the valley. If she had been perplexed at night, it seemed ten times worse by day: the house, with its familiar look,—Azor

polishing his arms,—her mother about her ordinary occupations,—and Benoni at his usual play. Did they really believe the Messiah—the King of Israel,—was to pass that way? or was it because they believed it that they were so calm? and was it only her wicked perplexities that made her so restless? She could not rest on her first station, but climbed higher and higher, hoping to catch the first cloud of dust, or the first flash of weapons. And so she watched until the sun began to decline, and she began to dread another night of suspense, when, in the farthest distance, she caught sight of a few straggling horsemen—then a few more—then a larger body. She waited not an instant, but flew over the rocky hills until she reached the vineyard. There sate Shelomith, peeling chestnuts for their evening meal, and little Benoni making boats of the skins.

"Mother! mother!" she exclaimed, breathless. Shelomith looked up composedly. "They are coming, mother,—it must be *Himself!*"

Azor came out from the lodge. "Are they near?" he asked eagerly.

"I saw them from the top of the hill."

"Then they will not be here for half an hour," he said, turning quietly away; and in another moment the sound of whetting steel recommenced.

"You look pale, child," Shelomith said; "and no wonder. You have been all day in the sun. Go in and rest."

"I am resting here, mother," was the reply. "But should we not make any preparations—should we not gather palm-branches?"

"I think grapes and dates would be more acceptable to the soldiers," was the reply—"and I have collected all I could. Where have you been all day?"

Achsah could not reply, and just then the first horseman came in sight. It was a motley cavalcade; some dressed in mere peasants' garments, armed with scythes and spears, and rough axes; —some looking less at home in the spoils of Roman legionaries;—but all had a daring, determined air, which gave them a more military character than weeks of drilling could have bestowed.

Azor hurried forward to greet the chief; Eleazar held back, in an attitude of homage; Shelomith held Benoni up to see the procession; whilst Achsah stood trembling beside her, gazing, and yet scarcely venturing to gaze, on the leader. There was a soldierly dignity and a habit of command about him, as he spoke to her brother, which evidently impressed him; and the whole party waited on the glances of his keen, quick eye. Achsah felt that he would know her again, though she only caught his eye once, as she gazed immovably on him. A few parting words from her brother, and he was on horseback among the cavalcade; and with a salutation to his father, and a loud cheer, com-

menced by Azor—"Long live the star of Jacob!"—the band swept rapidly out of sight, and left the valley silent.

Achsah stood some minutes like a statue, and then she sate down on the edge of the vine-terrace, covered her face with her hands, and burst into a flood of bitter tears.

She was roused by her father's hand on her head.

"What ails you, child?"

"Oh, father, I don't know! I am very wicked; but I thought *he* would have looked different!"

"Has not he an eye like a king? Are you such a child as to think kings must always ride about in crowns and purple robes?"

"No; it was not that," she said, gathering courage, and looking up in his face—"if he were only to be a king—but God's king, father—the Anointed!—I thought he would have looked holier, more as you look in the synagogue, or my mother when she hears Benoni pray."

Eleazar drew his hand hastily over his eyes, but he said nothing.

"Father," she resumed, at length, taking his hand, and looking down, "will God look on it as a very great sin if we mistake about this?"

"It would be destruction," he murmured.

"Then," she said, rising, and her voice deepening, "it does not seem to me like God to give us no clearer tokens by which to tell. If you sent

a messenger on an errand of life and death to me, father, would you not give me some sign I could not mistake, to know him by? or if not, could you disown me because I did not receive him?"

"Hush, child," he replied; "you must not compare the Almighty with me. He is all-wise, and we are very sinful and blind."

"But ah, father! the more you thought me likely to err, would you not be the more minute in every direction, so that I could not go wrong."

"Oh, child, do not tempt me; it seems as if some unutterable weight lay on our people, and we could not rise."

"Father," said the little, cheerful voice of Benoni, "mother says it is sleeping time; won't you come and read us a psalm?"

It was their family custom to read a portion of the Hebrew Scriptures morning and evening. To-day they had read the 22d psalm.

"What does that mean, father?" Achsah asked. "Did David suffer all that?"

"It is very dark, child! the rabbis, I believe, think it all figurative."

"But what do the figures mean?" said Achsah. "They are so minute."

"The wise men differ," he replied. "The Scriptures are a deep well, child, and without the golden pitcher of the holy traditions, vulgar hands can draw little from them."

"But, father, were they not meant for the people? I do think God speaks more plainly than the rabbis. You taught us once that we should bind them about our hearts—that when we go they may lead us, when we sleep they may keep us, and when we wake they may talk with us."

He had many a maxim which would have silenced her; but this evening there seemed a seriousness about the child which melted the hard crust of those icy conventionalisms away, and he only said—

"We will read together, Achsah."

Through all the vicissitudes of his life, and amidst all his sacrifices, Eleazar had kept one treasure inviolate—a clear and perfect manuscript of the Hebrew Scriptures; and many a ray of light had they thrown on his path, and many a hope had they shed on the burdensome ritual which he conscientiously laboured to fulfil.

On the next day Achsah came, in the first pause of her household work, to claim her father's promise. Her object now was definite, —to search those sacred books for every trace of an intimation by which she might know if this Barcochebah was, indeed, the true consolation of Israel. The object gave to these readings an intensity of interest which even Eleazar had never felt in them before. Scattered points of the sunbeams of promise had, indeed, at times, pierced through the veil which hid from him the

sun; but, for the most part, his readings of the law had been gone through like the ablutions and other ceremonies prescribed, from a sense of duty rather than from a hope of blessing.

Now it was different. These were the very words of the Lord,—the title-deeds and seal of Israel's inheritance,—and eagerly did the old man and his daughter watch for every word which should indicate a correspondence between the seal and that which claimed to be the impression.

Hitherto Eleazar had received the dictum of the rabbis of the famous school of Tiberias as the revelation of God. "Was not the Rabbi Akiba, the head of the school, a second Moses, the thousandth part of whose wonderful sayings the world could not contain?" But the child-like simplicity of his Achsah found a response in the honest and guileless heart of the old man, embittered by his vain endeavours not to perceive the selfishness and hollowness which characterised most of his fellow-workers in the cause to him so sacred; and the two read on together,—the child with a happy confidence that God must have given directions to find, and not to perplex,—the old man with less hope, because of his deeper sense of the guilt around and within him.

Those were happy noons, when the mid-day meal was over, and Shelomith watched in the heat over Benoni's mid-day sleep, and the father

and daughter took the precious rolls to the shade of the terebinth tree, by the well. Not that they saw much light; now and then there seemed to be a gleam—a vision of a glorious One to come—of sins to be buried and forgotten, and days of mourning to be ended for ever, and a reign of righteousness and peace. But quickly the shadow fell again over the bright picture, and judgment and suffering seemed mixed up so inextricably with the glory and the blessing, that Achsah's hope grew fainter as they proceeded; nevertheless they could not abandon the study.

"It seems," said the child, one day, "as if we were always going to find something, and as if the door were always on the point of opening."

One morning, as her eyes followed his hand along the page, she said—

"See how God loved our people! 'He found him in the desert land—in the waste howling wilderness. He led him about; He instructed him; He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest—fluttereth over her young—spreadeth abroad her wings—taketh them—beareth them on her wings—so the Lord alone did lead him.'—Oh, father, it is like my mother and Benoni. He must lead us; He cannot forsake us."

Eleazar repeated, as if to himself—

"But Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman

forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands!"

And that intense patriotism which God himself bound up with the religion of the Jew, and to which exile had given the tenderness of a passion, fed by the sacrifices and the labours of a lifetime, gave the fulness of youth to the old man's voice. Then as he looked up and saw the glow of inspiration which lighted up the dark eyes and fine features of his child, he exclaimed, —"If thou hadst only lived in the days of Israel's glory!" She smiled. "Are they not yet to begin?" But her smile had caught something of the melancholy of his.

Another time she would say—"Oh, listen, this must be Him!" and the words came from her lips like a song. "'He shall judge the poor of the people; He shall save the children of the needy; and shall break in pieces the oppressor. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him. For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth: the poor also, and him that hath no helper.'"

"Yes," he replied, "this must be God's King, ruling with resistless power, but not for Himself!"

And again her eye lighted on a mark that could not be mistaken. "'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul

delighteth. I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.' What does that mean, father? Is the King of Israel to be the King of the world; and are all to share the blessings?"

"It was certainly so promised to Abraham," he replied.

"But see," she continued, "can this be the same?—'He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench.' So great, and yet so gentle! Can this be the same? Such a King; and yet one, of whom the poorest and feeblest would not be afraid!"

"It seems the same," he said.

And again another day, she said—"Did you not say the origin of Barcochebah is involved in obscurity?"

"Yes," he said, repeating a current opinion; "when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He cometh."

"Yet, look here," she said—"'Thou Bethlehem Ephratah, out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to rule my people Israel.' Was not that said after David's time?"

"It was," he replied, and became involved in reverie.

"Then, father," she said, emphatically, "He must be to come! And, again," she said, pointing further on, "'My servant shall deal prudent-

ly: he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.' But then," she continued, "who can this be—'Despised and rejected, wounded, bruised? All we like sheep have gone astray. And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was cut off out of the land of the living.' He *dies*, father! that cannot be the Messiah? Yet see—'Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.' Were not the sin-offerings slain, father?"

"They were," he replied.

"And see," she resumed, with a trembling voice, "here is victory!—'He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be *satisfied*. By His knowledge shall my *righteous servant* justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.' A despised, rejected Messiah—a sin offering—the righteous servant of God—dying, yet triumphing! —father! father!" she exclaimed, "who can this be?"

Eleazar made no reply. She looked up, and caught his eye. Her face flushed crimson in a moment, and her lips parted for another question; but the awe-stricken expression of his face silenced her. And that day they separated without another word. On the morrow, Eleazar was summoned to the camp, on business of the highest importance, and for the time they read no more together.

One morning, during Eleazar's absence, Lucia had wandered with Irene and her child, guarded by two or three slaves, to the old well

on the hill, wishing to see the Jewish maiden again.

The well was closed, and no one sate on it. But in the vine terraces below, she recognised Achsah's form, toiling with her mother in the sun. She drew near, and asked for a drink of goat's milk. Shelomith paused in her work; and Achsah, recognising Lucia, said a few words to her mother, who courteously invited the stranger into her house. Lucia caressed Shelomith's child, and Shelomith took little Ianthe on her knee, and a mutual understanding was begun. Achsah withdrew to gather some grapes.

"More changes have happened to me," said Lucia to Shelomith, "than you can see. I have learned to know and love your Messiah."

Shelomith turned pale—"Are you looking for the deliverance of our nation?"

"I believe your Messiah has come," she said.

"Bar-chochebah—the star of Jacob?"

"Jesus, the Son of God."

"The Nazarene!" exclaimed Shelomith, looking round and breathing deep. "It is well my husband and Azor are not here."

Lucia rose, and, her face glowing with feeling—"No longer the Nazarene," she said; "your Saviour, and our Saviour—the Son of the Virgin, the Son of God. He has borne our sins, and now He has risen, He is enthroned in heaven. He has had pity, from His glory, on my babe and on me."

Then speaking softly, and gently taking Shelomith's hand—"Surely you do not reject Him," she said. "He belongs doubly to you. He was of your nation: He wept for you and your children, even when they were leading Him to be crucified."

Shelomith looked down, and her face became very pale.

As they left the cottage, and were descending from terrace to terrace into the valley, a soft hand was laid on Lucia's shoulder, and the Jewish mother whispered in her ear—"Have care of yourself and your child; there are dangers and death under your feet! Fly this land, for they say it is no longer yours. Remember these words, for, God forgive me, I cannot forget yours." And, laying her finger on her lips, Shelomith disappeared among the olives.

"What does it mean, Irene?"

"There shall be false Christs and false prophets: wars, and rumours of wars: the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not; and then cometh the sign of the Son of Man. The starry cross* shall flash from one end of heaven to the other, heralding him."

"Do you think it is near?" asked Lucia, shuddering as she thought of her husband and her parents.

"I know not," was the reply. "It is always

* A common interpretation in those days of the "sign of the Son of Man."

drawing near; and we are told always to watch."

That evening, as the two families sate together, Lucia related the warning she had received.

Nicias treated it lightly. "The Jews are never deficient in confidence," he said. "When their Temple was burning they looked for their King in the flames!"

"But there is no boasting among them now," said Cyril. "There has been a silence and a sullenness about them in the city, for weeks past, which I have not liked. I think the crust under our feet is thin, and beneath is a sea of fire!"

"Our Emperor against the King of Israel any day for me," replied Nicias. "The Roman army is within a day's march."

"But they are not *here*," said Cyril.

"Nor are the insurgents."

"The insurgents are everywhere," was the reply.

A slave brought a letter to Nicias. As he read it, his countenance changed suddenly.

"By all the gods!" he exclaimed, "you are right. The rebels have risen at once, at a hundred points. Forty fortresses have fallen into their hands. The main body, with this new prophet at their head, is marching on Jerusalem! We must prepare for departure to-morrow; and be with the imperial army on the following day."

"Why not to-morrow?" said Cyril. "At

least let Lucia and the child leave to-morrow; we can follow."

"Why not to-night?" interposed Lucia.

"There is no such immediate danger," he answered, tenderly. "Cannot you trust yourself to my care?"

And, returning to their home, they slept in security, and awoke in peace.

CHAPTER VII

CYRIL had ordered horses before dawn the next morning, but Lucia would not be separated from him; and at length it was decided that the two families, with their slaves, should make one party, and start before noon.

It was the first day of the week; and in the prospect of approaching danger, Lucia obtained a reluctant permission from her husband to attend the early morning assembly with which the Christians were wont to greet the dawning of the Resurrection Day.

At last he consented that she, with Irene and the child, should repair to the place of meeting, where he, with the horses and escort, would meet them in the course of two hours, whilst the sun was still low. Their place of assembly was without the walls—in the sacred enclosure of the garden of Gethsemane.

While it was yet dark, the two women, with the babe, attended by one black slave, crept through the silent streets to the part of the walls opposite the Mount of Olives.

They carried no torch, to avoid publicity, and

in the grey of the morning, beneath the fading star-light, they found it difficult to thread their way among the stones and ruins which lay in their path.

The streets were silent as death; but as they left the more public way, and struck across through some masses of ruins to a breach in the walls, there were lights in some hovels where the poor Jews lived, and before one or two of them groups of men were collected apparently in expectation. A cold apprehension crept over their minds, but they shrank from giving reality to their fears by uttering them. Lucia folded her child close to her bosom and drew nearer to Irene, and so they scaled the broken wall in silence, and came on the open valley. The descent was very steep, and Lucia's limbs trembled, but they reached the bridge in safety. As they stood on it, the first light of morning gleamed over the torrent, and when they entered the garden, the warm glow from the East, pouring in between two of the summits of the Mount of Olives, lighted up the desolate site of the Temple opposite them. The garden, with its olives, still lay in deep shade. There, among the silvery trees sprung from the stumps cut down at the great siege, resting against the black stems, seated on the ground, or walking in groups of twos and threes, were already gathered many of the church at Jerusalem.

The countenances were all Jewish, — the

church consisting entirely of the Hebrew converts.

With the exception of Lucia and Irene, not one among them had been an idolatnr. They had received Jesus as their Messiah. In the abasement of their nation, they had embraced the better hope; in the destruction of their Temple, they had learned to look through the veil into the holy place not made with hands; and the desolate city before them,—the queen without her crown,—the Holy City without a House of God,—cast no gloom upon them, for they were citizens of a City which had foundations, and whose God was her glory. Yet this morning there was a peculiar solemnity and weight upon them all; the petty questions of the Jewish laws, the differences concerning the reverence to be paid to the customs of their fathers, had been silenced by the approach of peril.

Some had perhaps been seduced from them by the flattering hopes held out to the nation by the insurgents,—some had been tested and aroused to decision,—some had already fled to other cities—and many more, like Lucia and Irene, were on the eve of departure.

At length a little band were seen winding their way down the opposite steep, and across the valley. Among them was a venerable elder, whose white beard fell on his breast, and the whole assembly rose and gathered together to

meet Bishop Judas, the fifteenth from the Apostles, and the last head of the last Jewish church in Jerusalem.

"Our nation have all gone after this deceiver," said the old man, mournfully. "The gentle voice of the Son of God has been despised, and they have taken the robber and the murderer for their King. Deeper and deeper our people must fall, brethren; they think they are rising against the Roman armies, but the weight that bows them down is the wrathful arm of Jehovah. They must be broken and scattered, become a proverb, a reproach, trampled as dust, winnowed as chaff, outcasts and strangers everywhere!"

And for a moment their own danger was forgotten in the natural grief of patriotism.

"Pilgrims without a Temple," continued the Bishop; "exiles without a home to yearn for, or a country to be exiled from! Heavy is the hand of our God, terrible is the vengeance of the Merciful when mercy is scorned."

The men bowed their heads, and the women wept.

"But for you, my children, for us there are other hopes. Pilgrims, but to what a Temple! strangers, but what a Father's house is ours! outcasts, but our footsteps watched by His eyes! The nations despise us, our people curse us; but the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

And instinctively, with the sympathetic enthusiasm of the South, the whole assembly took up his words, and in that place which had heard the thrice-repeated prayer of agony, swelled forth to a wild Hebrew chant the glorious words of the psalm the old man had commenced. Then, in a pause which followed, the Bishop repeated from St. Matthew's Gospel the prophecies of the tribulation and the glory of the end.

Again there was a silence.

"*Is the time come, father?*" arose a faint question from many lips.

"The false Christ is advancing—his people have massacred many of the disciples—his army swells as he marches; they say two hundred thousand men have sealed themselves his, by cutting off the fore-finger of their right hand; they report that he breathes flames, and works miracles, and his throne is to be established in Jerusalem?"

"May we then look up for our redemption?"

"We may be always looking for our Redeemer; the time is short, and soon He will either come in glory with the trump of God, or call each of us to Him by the still small voice of death."

"But are not these the last times?"

"Who can tell, my children? 'Of the times and seasons knoweth no man.' Jerusalem has already been once destroyed, and the nation scattered,—yet the sign of the Son of Man has

not appeared. The battle around us always seems the hottest."

"Is this antichrist the Antichrist?" it was asked.

"Have the kings of the earth given their power unto him? Does he deny the Father as well as the Son?" was the Bishop's answering question. Then he added—

"We think rather, great as the danger is, it is comparatively but a slight encounter by which the King is training His soldiers for the great battle that is to be."

"Wars and rumours of wars, earthquakes, pestilences, and famines, father," said one of the younger men, "and now this false prophet; surely the end draweth nigh! A century has passed since the heavens received the Lord, and did He not say, it would be but a little while?"

"My son, to me, perhaps to us all, the end will very soon come, and with Him the interval will seem but a little while."

There was a pause; then a timid voice asked—

"Have you tidings, father?"

"There will certainly be a persecution. The insurgents threaten to kill every Christian, men or women, or to lead them back to the old faith; they are accurately acquainted with our numbers and places of meeting. The time is come when we must separate to save ourselves the torture, and our people the crime; this is our last meeting. This evening we may not prom-

ise to meet within the city, for this evening Jerusalem may be in the hands of the rebels; therefore, once more, let us break the bread, and drink the cup He left us. Danger and separation, torture and death are before us, but our King has overcome the world. Here where He endured the weight of the unutterable agony for us—here where His sweat of blood has fallen—where His cry for deliverance arose three times, and no deliverance came, because He loved us and bore our sins—here, beloved, let us count the cost. Once all forsook Him and fled; shall we forsake Him? We are weak, brethren; weak women are among us; and the strongest of us is feeble to wrestle with the anguish men can inflict. Peter followed Him, and denied Him. Beloved, we are not stronger than Peter! Danger may be near at hand; before we commence this feast of remembrance, and sing another hymn to His praise, let all who cannot trust Him with soul and body retire."

But no one stirred—the little band drew closer together. Lucia leant against the encircling arm of Irene; and the little congregation forming a circle around the Bishop, he lifted up his hands and said—"Peace be with you."

The response arose loud and clear—

"And with thy spirit."

Then stretching out his hand to the Temple, he said—"Our Temple is fallen, but we have a house of God, not made with hands; our priest-

hood is destroyed, but we have a High-priest in the holy place for ever; our sacrifices are offered no more, but the Lamb of God has died for us, and dieth no more; our city is brought to the dust, but we look for the Jerusalem from above; our country is wasted, but we look for a heavenly country, where our crucified Messiah reigns. The way may be rough, children, but the Light of the world is with us; the heaven whither we are going is the house of our Father. He who has stood at the right hand of God to welcome many martyrs, will not fail us. He who has so pleaded with us to remember Him, will He not remember us? Fear not, little flock;" and the tremulous voice of the old man repeated the well-known words—

"In the same night in which He was betrayed, Jesus took bread."

At that place and time every word thrilled with overwhelming power on the hearts of those who stood there, steadfastly purposed never to betray Him. The service had a blending of Jewish and Christian forms in it. The men and women chanted antiphonally the last psalm of the Jewish Hallel, the passover hymn, which, in all probability, the Twelve had sung in that night of agony.

And from the Jewish voices, the words came with a touching meaning—

"The stone which the builders refused
Is become the head of the corner;"

—to them no stone of stumbling, or rock of offence, but the Rock of ages ; and in anticipation of persecution by the false Christ, in firmer, deeper tone thrilled the joyful acknowledgment—

"Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The sacred memorials were received in silence, interrupted only by tears.

But in the glorious hymn which followed, every heart seemed to lose its individual cares, and rise in one common incense of fervent praise with the angelic host, and the Church triumphant—

"It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God.

"Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name; evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts ! heaven and earth are full of Thy glory: Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High."

Then, in the silence which followed, gazing into the clear sky as if to pierce through the veil which divided the little band of confessors from the multitude there, the Bishop again lifted up his hands, and bestowed on the people the blessings of a father, in the words of the high priest of old—

'The Lord bless thee and keep thee ;
The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

The women embraced each other, and for a moment the little company yet lingered together, ere they separated to encounter the perils before them. Lucia's eyes, as she looked up, caught sight of a procession wending its way through one of the gates; and fancying she recognised the form of her husband, she lifted her heart in thankfulness, and gazing fondly on her sleeping child, wondered at her own fears. Her heart was lightened, and laying the infant in Irene's arms, she went round to the opposite side of the enclosure to say a parting word of love and comfort to a poor widow she had often helped. She was leaning down and speaking to the old woman, when a savage shout rung through the valley; and before the Christians had time to collect, one and another were seized by the hands of the wild soldiers, or rather banditi, who, rushing down the mountain side, filled the garden.

Resistance was out of the question. Lucia was among the first seized; and as they were binding her arms, she saw Irene pressing through the crowd towards her. For a moment, freeing her hands, she waved the slave away with passionate gestures, exclaiming in Greek—"Away, Irene, save the child; they will murder her at once; fly to the gate beside the Temple—there may yet be time."

Irene hesitated a moment, then reading the mother's heart by her own, she wrapped the

infant in her mantle, and fled unperceived through the olives.

Lucia thanked God as she watched the vanishing form, and then, sitting on a stone while the captors discussed the next step, she burst into tears, and wondered how she could have sent them away. But had she not seen her husband? In a few minutes Irene would have joined him, and there would be a rescue! Yet how could that be? The number of the enemy seemed already more than tenfold any force Cyril could muster, and armed men still kept thronging in.

The garden was full of tumult; and some threatened instant massacre—some wished the prisoners should be led before Bar-chochebah that they might grace his triumphal entry into the city; but through all the din, Lucia listened to catch more distant sounds, and she became aware of a confused tempest of voices sweeping in gusts across the narrow chasm which divided them from the city, and along the valley,—broken from time to time by shrieks and shouts, whether of pain or triumph she could not distinguish. But the suspense was soon ended; a horseman rode amongst the throng with a gesture of authority, which commanded silence. Brandishing a bloody sword, he said "The heathen are cast out of Jerusalem. He reigns whose right it is."

A shout arose,—"Life to the Star of Jacob;

long life to the King of Israel!" Lucia shuddered with a thousand mingled feelings; horror at the blasphemy, and pity for the misguided nation almost absorbing her own anguish, her fears for her child, and now for her husband and her parents. Then as she glanced at the olives and the brook beneath, and awoke to the sense for Whose sake she was encountering this, a feeling of indescribable peace came over her heart—a sense of resting upon a mighty arm; her tears ceased, as if wiped away by an invisible hand; and looking up again, she recognised in the young horseman Azor, the brother of Achsah. He evidently remembered her, for he looked compassionately on her; and then gave some orders which Lucia could not distinctly understand; she only caught the words, "Messiah" and "triumphal entry." And in a few seconds the prisoners were marshalled under Azor's directions, hurried through the broken walls into the city, and thrown into one of the vaults beneath the temple.

It seemed a dream. Only a few hours since, free, with Irene and the child, hastening to the Christian assembly, where her husband was to meet them; now childless, friendless, and a martyr! But was this, indeed, what was meant by martyrdom? She had thought of the martyrs, as so removed from the ordinary range of humanity,—of their confessions, as of an act so different from any of the common experience of

daily life; she had surrounded them with a halo of glory; and beheld them already transfigured on the mountain! Could it be that these around her in the prison, weeping, conversing familiarly, speaking of yesterday, and to-morrow, were among that holy army? Still less, she herself, with her heart full of so many things—longing to explain to her husband—to embrace her child, —she who had been so busy planning for the journey last night, and had only left her home a few hours since? She with faith so weak—so like her everyday self,—was she called to this destiny of agony and glory?

And as the darkness fell, and the little company grew silent and invisible, the thought came across her—"Will it be even thus with death? Will that strange world, too, seem familiar, and I myself, sin and the body gone, but still myself, be led as gently and naturally through that great change as through this?"

And a wonderful peace came with the thought, and she knelt down in the darkness and poured out her heart in prayer, and rose to wait for the morning, with as calm a heart as on the night before she had prepared for her journey. What would be the journey of that little band on the morrow? The road might be rough and dark, but it would be no exile. And thus waiting, she fell asleep.

She was wakened by the voices of her companions joining before dawn in the hymn to Him

who was the Light of the world. At the first moment, she felt a strange bewildered feeling—"Was death over?" But at the next, the heavy damp walls weighed on her heart, which yearned for her child; and, unable to join in the hymn, she sate and wept.

The hymn ceased; and, after a short silence, she heard a gentle voice beside her. She raised her pale face from her hands, and looking up recognised the bishop; but seeing the tender pity in the old man's eyes, her firmness gave way again, and her head drooped.

He laid his hand on her head—"Young,—young, poor child, for martyrdom!"

"O father, I am no martyr! I did not choose this. Even now I would be at home, if I could."

"It is well when the Father chooses for the child," he said.

"Yes," she said; "but I have heard that God delights only in willing sacrifices."

"Are you unwilling to follow your Master?" No reply.

"Are you willing to deny Him?" he asked, very gravely.

"No," was the low reply; "I could not deny Him!"

"You are then only unwilling to suffer?"

The slight frame quivered.

"I can bear pain; but we were so nearly safe, Cyril, our child, and I."

The old man said—"Pray then to the Father, that He may remove this cup from you."

"But is it right to pray not to have to witness for Him?"

"God does not delight in suffering, my child; and the blood which makes the robes of martyrs white is not their own. The confession, not the torture, makes the martyr. Your cup is bitter; ask our Father and His Father to take it from you. If not, child, you and I will find out soon that it was better to drink it."

Her face brightened as he spoke into an expression of rapturous hope, and, as he ceased, settled into a calm, which said more than words: —"Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done."

There was a sound of many feet approaching the prison door, and a band of men, armed with all kinds of weapons, entered. They seized the captives and roughly bound them together in pairs.

"Whither do you lead us?" asked the Bishop.

"To follow the triumph of the Star of Jacob," answered one of the fiercest, "and then to the death ye deem worthy of a king!"

"Are these the works of your Anointed?" exclaimed one of the younger men. "We should call them the works of the devil, for he was a murderer from the beginning."

"Let them be silenced!" exclaimed another of the armed men.

"One moment hear me," said the Bishop, in his calm, commanding voice. "I will silence them better than you can. Children," he continued, turning to the little band, "when *He* was reviled, He reviled not again."

They were led out. But amidst all the revilings of the armed men, and the mockeries of the crowd, that little band followed silent and patient in the train of the false prophet.

Bar-chochebah was surrounded with all that vulgarity of pomp which is so necessary to hide what is not truly great,—the clash of barbaric music, horses richly caprisoned, canopies of gold and purple, chariots and men in gorgeous dresses, the noisy homage of the multitude, the degradation and shame of captive foes.

The trial of the Christians was amongst the most imposing ceremonies of the day. A court was established, with such forms of law as that lawless company could extemporise. The national prejudices and hopes of the Hebrew Christians were appealed to—the national feeling, which, through all the misery of the destruction of the city and the temple, had kept the church of Jerusalem a distinct Jewish body.

"What had their Christ done for their nation?"—bewildering question to men who so little recognised the universality of His kingdom.—"What glory had He brought to Israel? what light to the nations? A few scattered bodies of believers springing up here and there was all

they could boast; what was there to distinguish their sect from heresy?"

But, imperfect as might be their ideas of the kingdom, that little band knew and recognised the King. Deep in their hearts, below all prejudices and systems, had penetrated the message concerning the Son of God and Son of man casting out devils, ruling the winds and waves, healing the sick, ministering to the lowest, receiving the outcast — denouncing only the hypocrite; dying on the cross, "the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world." And this unjust judge—this robber and murderer, how could they receive him instead? Therefore they endured tortures and death, confessing and rejoicing in Him, from whom neither things present nor things to come could separate them; and again the blood of martyrs and righteous men stained the streets of Jerusalem, where also their Lord was crucified.

At length the terrible day was over; yet the work of blood was not finished, and the remnant of the little band were carried back to the prison—a small and feeble remnant indeed. Men, and women, and children (there were so often children included in those early martyr bands) with limbs racked by torture, and hearts torn by the worse torture of gazing on the sufferings of their beloved.

They met again in the prison.

Were they vanquished? or were these sons,

like the Son, and in Him, also by death overcoming him that had the power of death, and not weakened but "made perfect" by sufferings?

There was no bread and wine with which to keep the feast it would have been so sweet once more on earth to commemorate together; but from the tremulous voices arose the evening hymn, and the burden of it could be no other than—

"Thou art worthy, for *Thou wast slain*, and hast redeemed us to God, by Thy blood, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

Low tremulous voices—voices of strong men made low and tender by anguish and sympathy; and yet the song was one of triumph,—new and eternal.

The Bishop was still among them, and the one Gentile woman. The old man's strength was faint; for he, like the Apostles, had been set forth last—a spectacle to all. Unable to stand, they had laid him down on the floor of the prison, tenderly placing the bruised limbs on whatever garments or fragments of them they could spare. He called Lucia to his side. She was there already. The arm of the Gentile was gently supporting the Hebrew bishop as that of a daughter.

"Child," he said—"children, this is not all in vain; the enemy is strong, but there is One stronger than he, and it is that gracious Hand

which is chastening us. Our Father giveth us this cup. The earthen vessel held the divine light; it was well. It is broken;—that also is well. The light must be spread,—"a light to lighten the Gentiles." I have had selfish dreams for my people; they are scattered; in Him there is neither Jew nor Gentile. I have had glorious hopes for Israel; they will be fulfilled; yet may Israel be a blessing in the earth. But much must be learned ere that. The glory must depart from us, that it may be seen to be in Him, and not in us. Deeper than all special gifts are the common gifts of life and love; higher than all distinctions is the common privilege of serving. The Jewish Church at Jerusalem must perish, that the Church of Christ in the world may be established. The national name must cease for a while, that the one Name by which the whole family in earth and heaven are called may be magnified. Children, it is well. The Father is but scattering that He may unite us. He is gracious, and He has not suffered our narrow plan to mar His blessed purpose; He has not allowed our selfish will to resist His loving will. We knew not His way; but we knew Him, and He has led us. Blessed be His name!"

The old man was silent; the broken sentences had become fainter, and uttered at longer intervals.

Again he asked for Lucia; she gently disen-

gaged her arm, and knelt down beside him. A smile came over his pallid features, and he asked that his hand might be placed on her head. They raised him, and laid the powerless fingers on her fair head.

"I thank Thee, Father," he murmured—"Thou forgivest me all my mistakes and pride! Near to Thee as we are, bless this Thy child. Bless her as Hannah—bless her child; help her as Mary—may she sit at the feet of Thy Son, bless her as Martha—may she serve Thee."

They thought his mind wandering. Was this a blessing for a prison?

Lucia sobbed—"Bless me, father, for to-morrow, for the martyr's death."

"God will bless thee, child, and strengthen thee for all. Thou art His."

A change came over his features; all crowded round him. Lucia gently laid down his hand, and pressed it to her sobbing lips.

"Father, hast thou no blessing for us?"

"Father in heaven," he murmured, "I am coming to Thee. Keep these Thy children—Thine!"

They pressed close to catch the last accents of the lips which still moved, but no sound came; and that night the last bishop of the last Jewish church in Jerusalem died.

They sate in silence around the corpse, when the door softly opened, and a woman entered. she threw the light of her faint torch around,

until it rested on the form of Lucia; then quickly touching her, she whispered—

"Come with me, I can save you."

Lucia started; she knew the voice,—it was Shelomith's.

"I cannot leave these," she said, "what have I else on earth?" And she turned to the women around.

"Go," they said, "go, sister; the Lord may yet have need of thee."

Then embracing the Hebrew women one by one, she silently followed Shelomith,—going forth into the world again, with the blessing of the old man on her head.

CHAPTER VIII.

LUCIA followed her guide through the dark streets, until she stopped at a well-known door. During that journey, Shelomith only opened her lips once. "They must all think you an idolater still," she said, emphatically. "Azor saw you among the Christians, but he will not betray you;" and without giving her time to answer, she drew Lucia within the old home of her childhood, now in the possession of Eleazar the Jew.

At first, the stern old Pharisee hesitated as to the admission of anything so profane into his house; but Shelomith, who knew how hard his theories were, and how gentle his heart, had brought the captive before she asked permission for her to be received there.

"What have we to do with these heathens?" he said; "has not our nation suffered enough for mingling with them?"

"Is it not written," said Shelomith, "that we shall not oppress the stranger? and do we not know the heart of a stranger?"

A strange perplexity expressed itself in his

face as he passed his hand across his brow. How could the law seem otherwise than contradictory, when the thought of the nation in itself usurped the place of Him in Whom, and for Whom, it was to stand?

"It is written also," he said, "that the sons of the stranger shall be our ploughmen and vine-dressers. The prophecy may be on the eve of accomplishment."

Eleazar made no further resistance, and Lucia remained. He believed he was compassionate, because God might permit it in this exceptional case. He *was* compassionate, because the Law-giver had engraven a law in his heart in letters which pierced through the false Rabbinical commentaries to the old eternal law which they nullified; and because an invisible hand was leading him whither he would not. So Lucia became a guest in the Jewish family. It was with a strange bewildered feeling she awoke the next morning from a long refreshing sleep, and recognised the little cell where she had slept in infancy, and been used to wake morning after morning to her flowers and her gods—the little cell where first she had seen a Christian pray. And in a moment—one of those moments which prove that human life is measured by something else—the intervening past, marriage, motherhood, the awakening to the love of a Father in heaven, the eucharist in Gethsemane, the imprisonment, the procession in honour of the mock Messiah,

the cruel crowd, the patient sufferers, the Bishop's blessing, pressed almost visibly upon her. An indescribable longing for her kindred —a yearning as instinctive towards the brothers and sisters from whom she had parted on the past evening, threw her with a force she had never known before, on the only relationship left her—the one which enfolded all beside—the relationship to God. She prayed, and rose from her knees no more dark and lonely. Was not the living God her Father? were not her beloved ones His offspring? and were not those among whom she dwelt now, erring and unlike Him as they might be, still His creatures, and therefore open to the message of His love? Thus, refreshed and cheered, with these thoughts more or less dimly in her heart, she went among the Jewish household.

Much was changed in the old house; the beautiful forms on the walls, the horses and chariots of the sun, the queen of heaven, the gods on the high places, had been carefully scraped off or coloured over, so that not a vestige of the abominations remained to disturb the washings, and prostrations, and long prayers of the Pharisee.

The readings in the Scripture had not been resumed; a deep gloom rested on Eleazar's countenance, but never had his observance of the habitual ceremonies been more painfully punctual and austere.

These Jewish ceremonies were all new to Lucia; of the Old Testament history she knew little; and she often wondered what God the Israelites really worshipped—in honour of whom the thousand minute ceremonies and laborious purifications were undergone. There seemed little delight in the service; it seemed to have little reference to morality, for all the moral precepts she heard of tended to self-exaltation and exclusiveness, and the practice was better, at least towards her, than this. A Lord of hosts, a God of armies, but more especially a King of Israel, who had chosen Israel, and was at war with all the rest of the world because they were not Israel,—this was the clearest idea she could glean of the Jewish religion. Was it possible that this could be the God revealed in the records to which the Saviour of the world so often referred? The perplexity increased daily, and she only found relief in the thought of her ignorance, in her sure confidence in the love of Him who had given His Son for the world, and in watching the youngest child of the house,—an office which Shelomith had tacitly assigned to her, and in which she never wearied. It seemed to bring her nearer her own lost darling. So she improvised hymns and songs about nature and home, and the eternal Home, and Him by whom hope was given,—which, being in Greek, were not forbidden,—until the child found a strange fascination in the rich Greek tongue,

and the sad, yet fresh and loving voice which sang in it; and in silence a union of the tenderest kind grew between the two mothers and the child.

One Saturday, however, Eleazar being seized with a sudden sense of responsibility with regard to the soul of the Gentile woman, endeavoured to commence proselytism by commanding her to accompany the women of his household to the synagogue. Lucia listened very attentively. The language had a grand old sound. It seemed to breathe of depths and mysteries, and to have fathomed primeval fountains of thought; —the sacred language which had been consecrated in its virginity to God. And the words she caught and understood were sublime:

"Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, God of our fathers the great God, powerful and tremendous, the high God, bountifully dispensing benefits!

"Creator and Possessor of the universe; our Helper, our Saviour, and our Shield, Thou, O Lord, art powerful for ever. Thou raisest the dead to life, and art mighty to save. Thou sendest down the dew, stillest the winds, and makest the rain to come down upon the earth, and sustainest with Thy beneficence all that live thereon.

"Thou art holy. Thou of Thy mercy givest knowledge unto men. Bring us back, O our Father! Be Thou merciful to us, O our Father! for we have sinned.

"Heal us, O Lord our God! and we shall be healed. Thou art a God who healest and art merciful.

"Bless us and satiate the world with thy blessings."

This was the God of Simeon, and Anna, and

David, and Abraham;—the Father of the Lord. Lucia's heart bounded at every fresh ascription, which seemed to lift a veil from the Old Testament, and remove the shadow which had rested for her on the early history of man.

The tears flowed down her cheeks, and the Christian woman prayed the prayers of the Jew, as perhaps no Jew in that assembly ever had. But then clear and terrible came the words added after the rejection of the Son of God, and the whole assembly joined in the anathema—

"O God, curse the Nazarene."*

In a moment she hid her face in her hands, and then, pale and horror-stricken, she sate motionless till the close of the service.

No word was spoken on the subject; but in the evening, when she had laid the child to sleep, and the two mothers stood gazing on the little sleeping form, Lucia sank on her knees, and, pressing the hand of Shelomith to her forehead, whispered—

"O mother, by the love you bear that child, and for the sake of the kindness you have shewn me, promise me that you will never again utter that curse, for you know not what you do!"

And Shelomith raised the Christian, and folding her arms around her, whispered—

"I have promised it before. I never have, and I never could."

* *Vide* Cave's "Primitive Christianity."

She said no more; and all the possible meaning which might be hidden under her words remained as dark to Lucia as ever.

Meantime the storm of lawless insurrection, and the oppression of a tyranny which took the name of law raged around, and Eleazar would return home often with tidings of triumph, and news of armies kept at bay, fortresses taken, and sieges raised; yet, in his triumph there was a restlessness and a disquiet which spoke of a disappointment deeper than all his hopes. Other more unscrupulous men enjoyed the honours of this kingdom, but for this he cared not. For him, was it not enough honour to make sacrifices, to offer up possessions, heart, life, things dearer than life, for the Nation? Yet something, amidst all this success, was secretly gnawing at the old man's heart, and he grew captious and irritable.

One evening he was sitting more moody than usual, his family fearing to interrupt his meditations by questions, or distract them by talking apart, when Azor entered fully armed, and hastily tearing off his helmet and sword, dashed them on the floor.

Shelomith looked up from her weaving—

"I thought you were bound on an expedition to-night."

"I shall be bound to this cause and its expeditions no more, mother!"

She turned very pale, and glanced timidly at

her husband, but he remained in the same gloomy abstraction, and did not even raise his head.

"It is no kingdom of God they are seeking to establish," he continued; "I will not fight for it; it is better to be crushed beneath it."

"What has happened, Azor? Last week you were so full of enthusiastic hopes—you said all the violence and bloodshed were necessary to overturn the evil, but that once done, peace and righteousness would reign."

"I thought so," he replied, "or tried to think so, but my eyes are opened. It is the old story, —robbing the fatherless—bribing God to sanction crime. One of our chiefs has been robbing a poor widow and the orphans of their inheritance. I have been to one leader and judge after another, in her behalf—I was so sure she would have justice; but some laughed at my youthful inexperience, some were compassionate but had no time, and one and all refused help. The oppressor was powerful."

"And the widow?" asked Shelomith.

"They are all dead."

"Not such a terrible lot, after all," muttered Eleazar, "a family united."

"But, father," exclaimed the young man, "what is this they say about miracles and breathing fire; what jugglery is that? God does not give conjuring tricks for signs, and no signs could prove this kingdom to be His."

"The multitude, boy!" muttered the old man. 'Truth may need vulgar sanctions with the vulgar."

"Oh, father, you do not believe that; that is what the heathen say. Our books never say that; they say God hates robbery, and lying, and oppression, and hypocrisy, and here is nothing else. I will never more fight for this cause; it is all a lie. Better to have died with the Nazarene."

Eleazar rose—

"My son," he said, "we may have to fight for life when we have ceased to hope for any good in life. The Roman armies are pressing close around us; and if not for the hope of Israel, we must fight for *these*,"—and he laid his hand with unwonted tenderness on the head of his daughter. "To-morrow our forces muster."

Azor looked down. "Is there, then, nothing above and beyond this earth? Is it all a lie?" And he quietly gathered up his arms. In such times youth ripens, and the shadows of age fall early.

One morning, not long after this, Eleazar had just returned from some early secret counsel of the chiefs, and was sitting in that little inner court, with its cool green walls, half reclining on one of the couches, leaning his elbow on a marble table, and shading his face with his hands, so that he did not notice the approach of Achsah. That retreat had become sacred to his solitary

meditations, and except when little Benoni inserted his angelic face through the vine-leaves which clustered round the pillars, none ventured to interrupt him. But this morning Achsah had ventured to break through the restriction. She had stood some time before him without his perceiving her. His attitude might have been one of happy reverie in Azor—in him she knew too well the despondency it expressed; and at length she gently touched his shoulder. He met her playful smile with a faint attempt at rebuke for the intrusion, but his eyes rested fondly on her bright face. Then she drew her other hand from behind, and held up a manuscript—

"Father, let us have more readings. I cannot understand this, but you can."

"Where did you find it?"

"In a niche in one of the sleeping-rooms."

"Some heathen follies, child, probably a play, or some song for their wicked idol-feasts. Give it me. Do you think all writings are holy?"

"No, but you understand these Pagan languages."

He read on some time in silence. Achsah became impatient—

"Is it a play?"

"No," he said. "It is singular, it is written to our people, and by one who seems well acquainted with our Scriptures. It is probably the work of some Alexandrian; the style is striking"

"Oh, read it to me, father," she said, seating herself at his feet.

He began—

"God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last times spoken unto us by His Son."

"The Son of God, father!" she exclaimed. "Do the prophets speak of that?"

"There is mention made of One who walked in the fiery furnace with the three faithful children, whose form was like the Son of God," he said, musing; and then reading on, he continued—"Yes, and in the psalm again, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee.' This book is full of quotations from the sacred writers. Here again—'For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?' (David says that in the 8th psalm!) 'Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set Him over the works of Thy hands'—(everywhere this strange blending of abasement and glory in one Being)—'Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet. For in that He put all things in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him.' The writer seems anticipating something further to be re-

vealed—'But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.' Again the Nazarene!" he murmured, and, grinding his teeth, he dashed the volume from him as if it had been a serpent.

"Father, I did not mean to grieve you; how could I know?" exclaimed Achsah, terrified.

"You have done no harm, child," he said, very gently; "but you had better leave me now."

"Shall I take up the book?" she said, timidly.

"No," he said, vehemently, "never touch it again." And she glided away.

He resumed his old attitude.

"If I could only cast the thought from me as easily!" was his bitter meditation. "What have I done, that the adversary should meet me thus at every turn? What observance have I neglected, that I have no power over myself? Did I not sit among the others who condemned the Nazarenes to death, and not argue a syllable in their defence? Did I not stand by and watch their torments, and never lift a finger to help them, hoping to fortify my heart against these terrible doubts by consenting to their shame and punishment; and when they racked and mangled that old man, did I not gaze on him as if his agony was a feast to my eyes? Did not one of the friends of the judges even turn pale at the

sickening sight, and admire the holy zeal which made it a delight to me? And if, when I exclaimed, in the very ears of the dying wretches—'Thus perish all the enemies of the Lord!' my heart within me quailed, and sunk, and whispered—'Such torments, doubter, are due to thee!' was that sin? And if the vision of Abel and the fratricide, of Jeremiah in the dungeon, and the three children in the fire, rose before me, could I help it! Just, and Holy, and Merciful! Thou knowest I forced my unwilling hands to take part in killing them: will the service be less acceptable to Thee because my heart bled in offering it? Will not this sacrifice blot out my sin? Have I not given my first-born to Thy cause—the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Didst Thou require more of Abraham? Why, then, cannot I look up to Thee in peace?'

And all day he sate there in that bitter anguish wrestling with himself until the evening came, and Achsah softly brought a lamp, and placed it silently on the table. But she could not bear to leave him so; and, twining her arm round his neck, she whispered—

"Father, can I do nothing for you? We were so happy in our mid-day reading by the old well, and now all seems so changed."

His face quivered with emotion.

"O! Achsah, if we had never had those readings! if I could but blot those hours out of my mind!"

"But, father," she said, "it was the Book of God."

"Yes," he replied, with great despondency, "the sin and the darkness is all mine! Leave me, my child, you cannot help me."

"Can I do nothing, father?"

"You can pray for me, child. God heard the voice of the lad Ishmael, and opened the eyes of Hagar."

And she went and cried to the God of Israel for her father. And in that house other prayers were offered day and night in the all-prevailing name of that crucified Son of God whom they knew not.

As Achsah, late that night, was about to put out her lamp in her sleeping-room, a shadow crossed the doorway. She raised the curtain and saw Lucia.

"Where have you been?"

"On the roof."

"Alone! What could you be doing?"

Lucia could be bound by no promise to falsehood, much less by a request from Shelomith, to which she had never acceded, and she replied simply—

"I have been praying, Achsah."

"To your gods? Oh, Lucia!" exclaimed the affectionate girl, sadly, "I am so sorry for you! I know they cannot hear."

"I have been praying to your God," replied Lucia, solemnly; "and I know He has heard."

"You *know*, Lucia? Oh, I wish I could feel that!"

Lucia hesitated a moment, and then she said—"I know He has heard me, Achsah, for I prayed in the name of His Christ, who was crucified for our sins."

Achsah retreated to her cell, and Lucia went to hers. So the night passed on. Eleazar still leant on the table, but before him was spread the Greek manuscript. He had held it over the lamp, and deliberately watched it burn, hoping so to burn the doubts out of his heart; but, as it slowly consumed, his eye caught one familiar name after another, until he became more and more absorbed in the contents—and, almost unconsciously, he suffered the half-burnt roll to fall on the table, while his very soul drank in the overwhelming argument which has set free so many thousands of burdened consciences. He knew so well the crushing load of sin, and how powerless all his painful observances were to take one grain of it away, that as the meaning of all those burdensome ceremonies broke upon him, and the vision of the heavenly temple, the Divine Priest, and the eternal Sin-offering rose before him, from the writings of one once bound as he was, the earth seemed to melt away, and he could scarcely restrain himself from cries of joy. Then came other thoughts—such, perhaps, as only a Jewish convert can know. This Son of God, this eternal Priest, this glorious Saviour,

was Jesus the Nazarene, betrayed, buffeted mocked, *crucified*—(and all the shame of that word *he knew*)—by his people. The Jews had crucified their King, their Messiah; and he himself had thought he did God service by torturing with every indignity those who honoured his Son. The thought was anguish, but, he scarcely knew why, it was not despair. There was something in the form of that crucified Redeemer which rose now before him that he could not turn from, though he should die in looking; and through the rest of that night he could only weep and say—

"O Christ! I have crucified Thee—I!"

There was an incomprehensible peace in saying this, and in dwelling on all the indignities he had offered to that sacred Name, and in heaping together every epithet he had once thought a mark of shame, and binding them about his heart, as more precious than the loftiest titles human lips can frame.

"Nazarene, Nazarene!—crucified, despised, stricken, forsaken of God, rejected!—Jesus of Nazareth, Galilean! Thou art the Messiah,—Thou art our everlasting King,—none, none but Thou!"

He uttered the sacred Name again and again—the very sound was joy; he wrote it on the fragment of the manuscript, and then pressed the letters to his lips, as if he would confess the precious truth with every faculty, and drink it

in with every sense. Not that he felt he was forgiven; he had never heard the "Father, forgive them" come from His lips, as they nailed Him to the cross; he knew not the history of him who wrote those living words; but he had found the Christ—he had found Him on the cross, brought there by his people, nailed there by his sins, and his heart could hold no other thought.

* * * * *

The next morning the family rose early as usual, to catch the first coolness of the Eastern day. Eleazar did not join the morning meal. Achsah said he had been sitting up late that night. They resolved not to break his sleep. So they separated to their usual occupations,—Shelomith to her household arrangements, Achsah and Lucia to their seat on the roof under the tent, Benoni playing in and out among the courts, and peeping through the vine-leaves to catch his father's smile.

Achsah whispered to her mother her discovery of the previous night, with regard to Lucia.

Shelomith had evidently known it before; and therefore, though she approached the subject with a vague terror, Achsah felt it no treachery to her parents to question Lucia further about it. At first Lucia answered briefly; but when she heard of Achsah's disappointment with Barchochebah, and of those mid-day readings with her father, and saw the eager, serious expression

of her face, a higher duty seemed laid on her; she lifted up her heart for wisdom, and her long pent-up feelings flowed out more and more abundantly, till the whole blessed history—as far as she knew it—had poured from her lips. Achsah's questions grew rarer, and her attention more fixed, till when she came to the "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani"—(words more familiar even than the Hebrew to the Syrian maiden)—she threw herself on her knees before Lucia, and grasping both her hands in hers, exclaimed—"Thank God! He has given us signs which we cannot mistake. I must tell my father at once!" Then gazing up into her eyes, she listened breathlessly, but without a tear, until she reached the history of Thomas. And then, as she heard the words—"Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing," she sank her face in Lucia's lap and sobbed—"No reproach?—not one word?"

"And Thomas said, 'My Lord and my God!'" was the reply. "But Jesus said, 'Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed. Blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have believed.'"

Then Achsah rose, and, the tears streaming over her cheeks, as she looked up to heaven with an expression of rapturous joy, she said—

"I have not seen, but I believe! I believe—'My Lord, and my God!'"

Happy conversation followed; Achsah was so

sure the whole family must believe, and that her father would find peace at last.

So the day wore on, when little Benoni crept up the stairs and joined them.

"Father will not look, sister!" he said, in an injured tone. Achsah started and turned pale.

"We have forgotten everything," she said. And they hastened down.

Gently she entered the cool marble hall. Eleazar leaned in much the same attitude as on the evening before. Beside him were the burnt-out lamp and the charred manuscript. She thought his sleep strangely heavy, and lightly touched him; but he did not move. She spoke his name at first softly, then louder, until her voice rose into a bitter cry—

"Father! father!"

But he did not answer; and she rushed out to call her mother.

The old man was dead. The sudden joy had snapped the feeble cords of life. His eyes had seen the salvation of God. and the weary spirit had departed in peace. What words can tell the agony that followed the first stunned alarm, —the rush of vain regrets,—the thought of the tender cares that might have been lavished,—the anxieties that might have been spared; and the pale beloved face lying there, the sealed eyes, and expressive lips for ever inexpressive, saying all was in vain!

But on Achsah this sorrow weighed more than

on any beside, and to her eyes not one tear would come. It was not only that she had brought that manuscript which had so agitated him; it was worse than that. It was a sorrow which brought no tender softening with it, for it darkened eternity. But that evening, when they had persuaded the widowed mother to rest, and Lucia and Achsah sate watching alone by the corpse, after many hours of silence, all Lucia's loving words of consolation never bringing a syllable of response, Achsah seemed unable to bear the secret anguish longer, and in a calm, hard voice she went through the history of the previous evening. At the end she raised her dry eyes to Lucia, and said—

"If I had listened to the thoughts which those sacred readings awoke in me,—if I had spoken them to him,—if I had loved him truly,—if I had loved any one but my miserable, cowardly self,—he might have believed. He was so honest and so brave, he would have believed, he would have sacrificed all!"

Lucia felt all attempts at palliation, or at tender remonstrance, would fall like empty, hollow words before the terrible truth of that dry and burning grief, and she bowed her head in silence.

At length her eye rested on the manuscript, which lay still on the table. Achsah could not touch it, and no one else had noticed it. At the bottom of the sheet Lucia's eye caught some

writing, which looked blacker and fresher than the rest, and she rose to decipher it.

She could scarcely believe her senses, as she read there, again and again, in Greek, the words—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Below was a sentence in another language; and at length she ventured to call Achsah. But before she could ask what they meant, Achsah was on her knees, beside the corpse, bathing the cold, stiff hand with her tears, and sobbing out, in the language in which they had been written—

"Jesus of Nazareth, crucified for our sins—Messiah! Blessed be Thy name for ever. Thou art the King of Israel! Thou art the Son of God!"

And then came back all the tender recollections of his love—the smile he always had for her, and that dear hand which he so often rested on her head to bless it; she knelt and wept, and prayed and gave thanks, while Lucia from time to time spoke of the risen Saviour, and the resurrection which is to come. For that precious cold form also was Christ's; and the voice which shall wake those that sleep would be no stranger's voice to him her weeping could not wake.

Azor read the words which were such new life to Achsah in respectful silence, and then said, with a bitter voice—

"Anything is better than this tyrannical impostor."

Shelomith did not seem to heed it much. She only said—

"The only happy death-bed I ever saw was my sister's; and she believed the same."

But as Achsah spoke to her, and unfolded by degrees the Story of Peace, Shelomith seemed to receive it naturally as an old familiar history, and to rest upon it without questioning,—without any burst of joy, but with a quiet thankfulness and trust.

They buried him quietly at early dawn, to avoid the Jewish wailings and ceremonies, although they well knew the suspicion this would excite, and the danger it would involve.

Thus, in the very heart of the city of the False Christ, a household was gathered into the fold of the Good Shepherd; and in the midst of the tumultuous reign of the usurper, subjects were added to the kingdom of peace.

Azor alone, of the family, seemed dissatisfied. "Is Israel, then, cast off for ever?" he would say; "and shall earth never know a reign of justice and peace?"

But on this Lucia could not enter. The patriotism which burned in St. Paul's heart was unknown to her. She knew of the heavenly country, the Jerusalem which is above, and the One Family in heaven and earth,—the first and the last truths,—the earliest and the highest;

but of those intermediate purposes of God, which form so large a portion of Old Testament prophecy, she knew nothing. She could only say—"He will come again in glory, with the holy angels, and then we shall know."

To Achsah and Shelomith, who had learned truly to call Jesus Lord, this was enough; but to Azor it seemed hard that all the old special promises to his nation should thus melt away; it perplexed him that half the Scriptures should be thus strangely defined and literally fulfilled, —and the other half dissolve into a mist of general blessing. But he was convinced that what he heard was true, and waited impatiently for more light.

Meanwhile they had frequent discussions as to what their next step should be. Achsah thought they should stay and confess their faith, —the faith in which their father had died. Shelomith was passive—content to die where her husband had died, or to go with her children. Azor, though calmly and fully convinced by external evidence of the truth of Christianity, had not that inward witness of the spirit testifying of the Saviour, which made the thought of martyrdom a joy to his sister. Lucia, knowing better than any of them what martyrdom was, and having, also, brighter hopes in life, and a simpler reliance on the love and care of God in the minutest events, longed to escape from the polluted city. She said they were commanded to

flee persecution,—not to covet it; and she prayed very earnestly every night and morning to be restored to her own beloved ones. She began to think the way was opening for their return. In Jerusalem, however, everything grew darker and darker. The Romans had already frequently defeated the followers of the False Christ. The old prestige of Rome returned with the failure of their arms,—that failure which, in a religious war, is double ruin, because it implies imposture. The quick-sighted courage of hope was rapidly giving way to the wild daring of despair,—and despair, though it may nerve for death, cannot quell internal strife. Long smothered jealousies broke out; if people looked gloomy, they were suspected of unbelief,—if they feasted and were merry, they were accused of treachery. The hapless city combined the miseries of a fanatical tyranny with those of a lawless camp. No man trusted another. Assassinations became frequent in the houses, and bloody quarrels in the streets; and over all, among the more thoughtful brooded the terrible conviction, that they had insulted Heaven by choosing a robber and a murderer for their Messiah.

"What did they mean, Lucia," asked little Benoni, one evening, as she was amusing him apart from the rest, "by looking so angrily at us to-day as we came through the streets, and talking of a sacrifice? Do they sacrifice anything but lambs?"

Lucia shuddered, and turned the conversation by telling him the story of Iphigenia.

"But I know another story, better than that," said the child, "it ends so happily;" and in his childish way he told her of the sacrifice of Isaac—"And God found a ram, Lucia," he concluded, "and then Abraham took his son home again to his mother. God would not let the child be killed, mother says, He is so kind."

"God has indeed provided a holy and spotless Lamb," she answered.

And he wondered why the tears filled her eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next morning Azor left the house before it was light, and the household had scarcely set about the day's work, when one of the slaves rushed into the court where Shelomith and the women were taking their morning meal—

"They are coming up the street in troops," he said; "they threaten to murder us all."

"They come for me," said Lucia, rising and moving away. "I am the sacrifice."

Shelomith grasped her arm.

"Where are you going?"

"To meet them," she said, softly.

"Are you mad, Lucia? Do you not know that blood whets the thirst for blood? For our sakes stay. Is not thy God our God?" she added in a calm voice. The child clung to Lucia, and, before she could disengage herself, Achsah quickly passed through the bewildered slaves and bolted the outside door. The next minute the fierce voices sounded in the street, and heavy blows resounded through the narrow passage which divided it from the atrium where the women and slaves cowered together. Lucia lifted up her heart in an agony of prayer. "It

could not be meant that she should bring destruction on the home which had sheltered her!" In that prayer it was as if her heart caught the pitying smile of a Father, and with a courage and hope she could not comprehend, she set about encouraging the household to the defence. The door, though strong, could not long resist, but the passage which led to it might form a further barricade. Everything heavy in the house was heaped there. They dug up the stones of the court pavement to complete the barrier, and having done this, waited a few minutes in silence.

But the feeble barriers must ultimately give way. Every moment gained was but death delayed. In the pause after the excitement of barricading, this conviction forced itself on all.

Lucia mounted to the well-known roof, to see if there was no hope of escape there. On one side, as it has been said, the wall of the house rose in a line with the rock on which the city was built. She glanced eagerly over the steep, smooth precipice until her eye rested on a narrow ledge below the foundation of the house. It might be a place of refuge. How to get further was a mystery; but anything was better than to fall into the hands of an enraged mob. She hurried back, and in an instant every chain in the house was collected and knotted and twisted into a ladder, and again they clambered to the roof, and threw it over.

It was too short. The blows continued, and the wood and iron both began to crash. Lucia threw off the outer mantle which covered her tunic, and the other women followed her example. They knotted these together, and the ladder was finished.

Meantime some of the slaves had escaped to roofs of neighbouring houses,—a safe refuge for them, but not for any of those against whom the vengeance of the people was especially directed One remained to hold the ladder by which Lucia, Shelomith, Achsah, and little Benoni reached the narrow platform of rock in safety, and then, throwing the ladder after them, he fled.

Yet even there, safety was most precarious: —below them, the perpendicular descent to the bottom of the valley; above them, the house with which they had cut off their only means of communication. The death before them now seemed more terrible than that from which they had escaped. Shelomith gazed on her child, Achsah on her mother, and Lucia felt as if she had murdered them all, and gazed at the black rock, as if it was less impenetrable than the other difficulties which seemed to surround them. As her eye glanced vacantly over it, she traced at the extremity of the ledge, a rude arch filled up with masonry. Hastily approaching it, she pressed with all her force against one of the smaller stones. It gave way, and almost before she could draw back, the whole of the loose

stonework, dislodged by the displacement of this one stone, fell with a great crash outward into the valley, leaving the aperture clear. It was the entrance to a cavern. At the same moment she heard a savage yell from above. They must have entered the house. The women shrank cowering under the steep side of the rock; but before the echo of the last falling stone had died away along the deep valley, Lucia had drawn them into the place of refuge. Then, as the yells grew more frantic above, and the boy broke into a terrified cry, Lucia took him from his trembling mother, and talked to him with her bright winning voice into smiles.

Achsah had scarcely ever spoken to Lucia before that last conversation on the roof. She had avoided her as a Gentile—she had scorned her as something childish; and in her heart had often said, as she heard the young Greek's soft laugh, answering that of her little brother—"It is not thus the Hebrew women mourn. I would love differently from this." And each fresh effort the exile made not to be a burden on the home which sheltered her, seemed to Achsah only a proof of the Greek coldness and lightness of heart. She would have thought her more of a heroine, if she had yielded to her sorrows, and sate apart, or refused to eat, and pined away. A martyr who could smile, and weave flowers, and enjoy the prattle of a child, was not at all after Achsah's model. And even that morning

she had been indulging the bitter thought that Lucia did not feel what she had cost them.

But a new aspect seemed to open on her now; and sitting down beside the stranger, she said—

"Lucia, I have been unjust to you; you have saved us all."

Lucia looked up in wonder.

"We are not saved, are we?" she said.

"You look as happy as if we were."

Lucia looked brightly in her face.

"We are *safe*," she replied, in a low voice. "God knows where we are."

Achsah was silent; she began to understand Lucia. She began to understand the faith which can unite the heroism of a martyr with the happy trustfulness of a child.

Meanwhile Lucia, unconscious of the lessons she was teaching, was busying herself with the child in disengaging some dates and chestnuts which she had contrived to wrap up in her mantle. So she amused him till he was tired, and Shelomith's faintness had passed, when the mother took the weary child in her arms, and he soon fell asleep.

The angry shouts continued above, and once or twice the fall of heavy stones, and tables, and benches, which the disappointed mob, in their frenzy, were throwing into the valley, made them think their hiding-place was discovered. They sate looking at one another for hours, fearing lest any movements should wake the child, and

his frightened cry betray them. But he slept on peacefully, as if for him the rocks were cleft, and the sunshine beaming through; and the presence of the sleeping child sent a peace into the hearts of those that watched him.

At length the terrible sounds died away, and then the silence seemed more terrible still, as the early darkness shrouded the deep valley, and weighed on them in the cavern like something solid. That evening they were unable further to explore their hiding-place. Lucia disentangled the shawls and mantles which had formed the ladder, and, wrapped in these, she and Achsah fell asleep, like sisters, in each other's arms.

Shelomith sate and watched her child.

"It is just!" she thought, lifting her heart up, and the soliloquy became a prayer. "But it was not only fear that sealed my lips—my faith was dim and darkened by a thousand doubts; I could have died, but then who could have taught these of Thee? Thou gavest them to me; how could I be content to enter heaven alone? But I see it all now. I thought to honour Thee—I should have obeyed Thee: I thought to save my beloved—and Thou hast died to save them, and I could not trust Thee."

When Lucia awoke in the morning she saw the mother sitting in the same place as on the previous night, the child still on her knee.

"How selfish I have been!" she said; "I did not mean to sleep more than an hour."

Shelomith smiled. "He giveth His beloved sleep," she said.

"Oh!" said Lucia, in a pleading voice, "He loves you also."

"I know it my sister," was the soft reply; "He has proved it at too great cost for us to doubt."

Lucia with difficulty persuaded them to eat some dates, and then set about exploring the cave.

Happily little Benoni awoke in excellent spirits, and seemed bent on taking the whole thing as an entertainment devised for his express benefit, clambering over the rough stones, and greatly delighting in the mosses which here and there covered the damp walls, and the dry grass outside, stirring about as busy as a bee, humming little songs to himself.

The cave was evidently artificial; and the question of life and death for them was, whether it was merely a tomb or refuge scooped in the side of the rock, or an outlet to some of the many vaults with which the city was honeycombed. The passage extended some way into the rock, narrowing, however, and getting lower as it advanced. They feared this must indicate that it had been formed from the side of the valley, and that the only outlet was there; nevertheless, stooping, and then creeping among the loose stones, they penetrated further and further, till the light from the entrance was lost. Then Achsah began to perceive a faint gleam from the other side. It became more distinct;

but just at the moment when hope was dawning on them, the roof suddenly lowered, and it was impossible to penetrate one foot further. After groping about for some time, in the vain hope of loosening some of the masonry, or finding some side outlet, they were obliged to return. There was no need for Shelomith to ask a question —all was told in their faces. Achsah threw herself on her mother's neck, and wept passionately.

"Oh! mother, mother!" she said, "death without choice, and without failing strength! To sit here and watch him come, step by step, to one after another! I wished to die confessing the Messiah, but this is terrible. So dark—and so in vain!"

Lucia longed to say a word of the best comfort, but the right words would not come; and leaving the mother and daughter to weep together, she took little Benoni, and began to tell him stories from those blessed histories which before she had scarcely thought it loyal to her hosts to make him love. As she was finishing the history of the ruler's daughter, and the little eager, solemn face, catching the reflection of her own, was looking up for more, Lucia noticed that Achsah had silently seated herself on the ground beside her, and was listening as earnestly as the child. The old haughty expression of her dark eyes was softened, but there was a distressed, perplexed look in them instead. Lucia went on with narrative after narrative from the

Gospels, until the child was tired, and went back to his play; but Achsah listened on, at first in silence, at lengths he said—

"Oh, Lucia! if we might only have died martyrs; but to perish here like fugitives and cowards!"

"Is it not much to die believers!" was the gentle answer.

"But I should like to have done something for Him; to have borne such testimony to Him with my dying lips, that others must have learned to know Him and adore Him."

"Is it for His sake you long for this?" asked Lucia.

"Think of what He sacrificed for us," was Achsah's faltering answer; "and to bring Him back nothing, nothing!"

"But, dearest," said Lucia, "are we not His servants? and if He has given us this, and only this, to do, must it not be this, and only this, which would please Him? Is it not love which he desires; and is not obedience the only test of love? And is not the obedience of submission as dear to Him as the obedience of martyrdom?"

Achsah looked thoughtful for an instant, then a bright smile shone over her face, and she said—

"It must be true! we can endure even this for Him! And, Lucia, is it possible that His approving smile may beam on us here as fully as on those martyrs the False Christ tortured?"

"'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me,'" said Lucia, softly, and they fell into a peaceful silence.

Other conversation followed at intervals. Lucia told them of the Apostles who stood gazing into heaven, till the angels sent them home with the promise of their Lord's return; of the troubles He had prophesied; of the last great tribulation; and the last fearful Antichrist, whose tyranny His coming was to end.

"Is not this like it?" asked Achsah.

"The Bishop and Irene think not," Lucia replied; "though they both said that wonderful joy might surprise us at any hour."

She told them of the "sign of the Son of man." They believed a fiery cross would span the heavens, in token of His near approach. And then she spoke of the heavenly Jerusalem, and the Throne, in the midst of which was the Lamb as it had been slain—the city whose light God and the Lamb would be.

So they sate and spoke two days, and then, on the evening of the second day, they became silent. For the whole of that day the women had eaten nothing, and now nothing was left for the child. He grew at first fretful from hunger, and left off his play.

"When will my father come?" he asked. "Why does he not come and take us away, or bring us bread?"

Shelomith took him on her knee, and tried to

soothe him, but in vain. Then she said, half fearing he would not understand—"Your father will not come, Benoni, but Jesus the Messiah will come."

The child's face brightened, and he said softly —"When?"

"I do not know," she answered. "He is watching you now, though you cannot see Him, and He will be pleased if you are patient."

He nestled in her bosom, and fell quietly asleep. He awoke with a feverish murmur for bread. His mother whispered that Name to him, and the parched lips quivered for a moment, and then parted into a smile. And there he lay for hours, the little head drooping more and more—the face more flushed; until at length, as the fever increased, his mind began to wander back to the cottage and the vineyard and the well, and he spoke of bright visions which they could not see; and the solemnity of an angel's joy came over his childish face. He ceased to call for any one by name. But as the night came on, this also passed; his cheeks grew white and sunken; and, in a feeble, natural, childish voice, he murmured—"Mother."

She raised his head, and whispered—"Are you tired, Benoni?"

He fixed his large wistful eyes on her, and murmured—"He carries the lambs in His bosom." Then he looked up with a grave wondering smile, and sighed "Jesus;" and almost

before the sacred name had left his lips, he had gone from them, and the little lifeless form lay on the mother's knee.

They none of them wept. They hoped so soon to follow him. But, in the darkness, Achsah crept close to Lucia, and said—"Now I can see you and my mother die, and die afterwards here, and yet be sure I shall not be alone."

And so the night passed on. It was an unquiet night. The winds howled through the valley, and with them came fiercer sounds, wailings and war-cries. Outside that living tomb of theirs, the world still lived, and hoped, and feared.

Achsah said—"All dear to us are there."

The thought brought back a rush of life to Shelomith's heart, and she listened.

The sounds grew louder and fiercer around, above, and beneath them, and torches gleamed below in the depth of the valley. Then towards morning came the crash as of falling walls, nearer and nearer, when suddenly it seemed as if the solid rock above them had given way,—so terrific and so close was the noise. They hid their faces till it was over, and Achsah clung to her mother. They were roused out of the death-like stupor into which they had fallen.

Lucia looked up, expecting to see the glorious cross of fire flashing across the heavens; but, instead, there was nothing but the calm common daylight flowing in from the other side of the cave.

The vaults had fallen in; and the ruin which had scattered panic among the forces of the False Christ had brought them deliverance. The three women embraced each other and wept for joy, and murmured dear names they had not dared to utter for days. They had not known life was so precious. But Shelomith held the body of her boy, and for the first time she shed tears over it.

Still, sounds of battle and terror were around them; and after much entreaty, Lucia persuaded Achsah to remain with her mother, while she climbed up into the daylight to see what was going on. She came up near her old home. It was a mass of ruins; but the street was deserted, and, cautiously creeping among the well-known rooms, she found some wine and broken bread and fruit scattered about. Seizing these, and filling a pitcher with water, she escaped into her retreat, just in time to avoid a band of armed men who were prowling about the ruins.

She reached Achsah and Shelomith, laid before them the food she had not herself tasted, and then, overcome by hunger, fear, and all the mingled emotions of the past days, sank fainting beside them.

They spent every loving care upon her; and were so occupied with her, that before they heard a step, a Roman soldier stood before them.

In an instant he was on the ground, had laid Lucia's head on his breast, and was lavishing

every tender name on her, in a language the Hebrew women could not understand. But to Lucia the words and tones were life; and the languid eyes opened, and she murmured her husband's name!

Then came the murmur—"My child!" and the look that calmed all her fears, and the eyes closed again, and for some minutes she lay in a rapture of rest. Then arousing herself, she smiled on Achsah and Shelomith, and said—"My mother and sister, Cyril," and tried to rise, but, being unable to stand, sate down again on the stones.

For the first time he saw her companions; and, recalled to common life, seemed to remember he had other work to do. And, gently commending his wife to Achsah, he rose to leave them. But Lucia clung to him in an agony. "*Together*, Cyril," she said; "we belong to each other!"

"You are only safe here," he said.

"But you," she said; "what is safety without you!"

"Would you keep me from my post?" he said, his very tenderness giving sternness to his tone.

The last months of trial had not passed over the fervent, impulsive nature in vain; and, taking her hands from around his arm, she clasped them together for a moment, then turned her tearful eyes on him, and pressing his hand once on her heart, let it go, and said—

"I can trust God, Cyril, with you."

And with one kiss on her forehead he was going, but Shelomith stood in his way and asked—

"Who is ruling in Jerusalem?"

"Do you know nothing of what has happened? The False Christ, the impostor, is slain. Blood runs like water in the streets, the valleys around are full of slain, the Roman armies have entered the city, but the battle is raging still in every street and every house."

He hastened away, but turned back once more and said—

"I will set a guard over you, but stay where you are."

In a moment he was out of sight.

Lucia almost feared to look at Shelomith, but when she did, her face was calm, and she only said—

"I thank thee, O God of our fathers! my babe is at rest."

Then turning to Lucia, she said, with incontrolable bitterness—

"Thank God that you do not belong to an accursed race."

Lucia started, half ashamed at her own happiness, and said, gently—

"The Apostles were of your people as well as the Pharisees; and you, are not you blessed of Him?"

Then feeling the powerlessness of words, she

endeavoured to direct the bereaved mother's heart to the present, and together the three laid out the child for his burial, making a shroud for him out of Lucia's white mantle.

And then came long hours of suspense, till, as the day wore on, the sound of approaching footsteps fell on the ear, and then they ceased, and were succeeded by low moans of pain. The struggle between pity and fear lasted but a moment. Achsah remained with the corpse, and Shelomith and Lucia hastened to the spot whence the sounds came.

"It must be one who knows the secret of these vaults."

"Cyril?" murmured Lucia.

"Or one of our own people," Shelomith replied.

A momentary glow of thankfulness came over Lucia's face as she recognised the features of Azor, succeeded by the truest sympathy, as she saw the anguish in Shelomith's eyes.

Languor, and sorrow, and pain, were too deeply stamped on the countenance of the young Jew for the sudden meeting to efface the traces even for an instant, and he said, with scarcely any visible emotion—

"We shall then die together."

He pointed almost triumphantly to the blood oozing from his side. Shelomith stooped down, and drawing him close to her, endeavoured to staunch it.

"O Azor, life is worth preserving even now, and God is merciful. I did not think so three days since; but since then we have been on the verge of death, and I feel it is sweet to come back to life."

"I thought you were a Christian, mother?"

"And because I am a Christian I feel life precious," she said.

"With heaven open to you," he said languidly, "what should a Jew wish to live for now? Vengeance has fallen on our nation; it is ruined, you say, and I believe, not by the sword of the Roman, but by the rejection of the Messiah. What hope, then, is there for us on earth?"

Achsah joined them, and kneeling down beside her brother, she said,—

"Dear Azor, we are Jews, and there are Jews to save; we are Christians, and there is Christ to confess."

He did not reply, but the languid, desponding expression passed. His lips were compressed, and his eyes brightened as if with a hope and a purpose, whilst he helped them to disengage him from his armour and examine and bandage his wound. It was deep, but not fatal; and with the exhaustion of the loss of blood and the pain, he fell into a refreshing sleep, with his head on his mother's knee, while Achsah returned to Lucia.

Cyril came at length, with torches and men, and after a few whispered words with Lucia, they succeeded in carrying Azor away, still sleep-

ing, whilst Shelomith bore the body of the child to a house Cyril had found for them among the ruins.

Happiness was the best narcotic to Lucia; and weariness brought the same blessing of sleep to Shelomith and Achsah.

Lucia was the first to wake; and, lifting up her eyes, they rested on her husband, who sate watching beside her. It was waking to unmixed joy, as she placed her hand in his and closed her eyes again.

He watched her in silence, and thought how sweet it would be to wipe out every trace of sorrow from that face, so young and fresh, yet so marked by anxiety and sorrow. He fancied she was sleeping, so childlike was the smile which rested on her lips; but they moved slightly, and when her dark eyes opened on him again, they were full of tears.

She had been praying, and prayer had recalled her to the care of those around. She looked round on the sleeping forms of Shelomith and Achsah, and rising softly, spoke to her husband of the dead.

"The child is buried," he replied.

"Where?" she asked.

"In the place where you met and prayed on that morning," he said, "across the brook."

She looked up suddenly, and a hope dawned on her so precious, she dared not risk its being overthrown by asking any questions.

"Could you not have waited until she woke?"

"Why?" he asked gloomily, "you could not have ventured near the place; it was better over, the valley is covered with mangled corpses."

She shuddered. "Let us escape from this doomed place, Cyril."

"All is ready," he replied; "to-day we must be on our way to Antioch, and then away from this doomed land for ever."

"Is my child there, and my mother, and father, and Irene?"

"All."

She was again lost in her happiness.

When Shelomith awoke, she felt and then looked wistfully around as if she had lost something; then arousing herself completely, she came to Lucia, and asked softly—

"Where is Benoni? Where is my child?"

"He is laid in the grave," said Lucia, too full of the sorrow to disguise the truth. She feared a burst of passionate grief.

But Shelomith only said reproachfully—"That was scarcely kind, Lucia. You might have known I could have borne it." And then she added more vehemently—"He was mine—no one had a right to touch him. Where have they laid him?"

Lucia's eyes sank before that piercing gaze, and she said, with reverent tenderness—

"He is laid near where He was in agony, and

prayed three times that the bitter cup might pass, and it did *not* pass."

The look of passionate determination was changed to one of unresisting anguish, and she sank down on the couch, and hid her face in her hands—not moving even when her daughter's arms were thrown around her; and Lucia left them alone together.

"Cyril was right," she thought, as she went to prepare for the journey; and when, an hour afterwards, she returned and found the mother bending over Azor, and lavishing on him in his weakness the tender love with which she had soothed his infancy, she felt that God had provided a balm, and that this second sorrow would heal the first.

The next morning they left Jerusalem. The early light fell on nothing but desolation and death:—the hills around laid waste; the city itself in ruins; fires smouldering in the streets, consuming the dead that filled them; vines and corn trampled or cut down. For once, Nature seemed to share in the misery of man; on the desolated mountain slopes and shaded valleys full of corpses, and among the wasted vineyards, sate hopeless groups of captives. The work was done at last; the heart of the nation was broken, and since then Judea has never again become a home for the Jew.

The roof of the house at Antioch looked over

the sea, and below, in the harbour, lay the vessel which was to convey the family to the "isles of the Gentiles." Cyril and Nicias were in the city with Azor making arrangements; Shelomith sate looking towards the hills of Palestine, and Achsah leant over the balustrade beside her; on the other side, a little dark-eyed girl was beguiling into all kinds of play and carresses a dignified matron who had never condescended to any such endearments towards her own children; and watching them, and looking towards the blue horizon of the Mediterranean, sate Lucia and Irene in close conversation. Irene's manner had in it a mixture of reverence and tenderness which had perplexed Lucia.

"You are not towards me as you used to be," she said, half reproachfully—"there seems a distance between us; I know I never can be like you, Irene, but you surely do not love me less."

Irene's voice faltered as she replied—"Is there not a distance between us? have you not been among the confessors? were you not willing to be a martyr?"

Lucia looked down—

"I could not help it, you know, Irene," she said, "I was never very willing to die, I wished so much to live, to see you all again; and I asked that I might, and now I am so happy and thankful."

"But you preferred death to denying Him?"

Lucia coloured deeply.

"I could not have done that;—ncr could you," she added, looking at her with a beaming smile.

"I have not been tried," was the reply.

"You would have been nobler than I was; you would not have asked to escape."

"I have not what you have to live for," was the quiet answer, "though I have indeed much. But do you think I grudge you that crown? I only reverence you for the honour God has given you; I longed for it once," she said, with a sigh, "but not now, it is best as He wills."

"The Bishop said that was the sacrifice He accepts," said Lucia, "simply submitting willingly to the will of God. No," she added, with an affectionate smile, "you are the martyr, Irene!" Then, suddenly changing her tone, she said—"You must indeed have suffered, Irene; I have not thought of it half enough. How terrible it must have been to return without me! Were they cruel to you?"

"Your husband protected and cherished me as his sister; he said he felt as if I were yours." Then remembering the bitter words and furious threats with which she had been greeted, she continued—"It was natural they should attribute their loss to me, and dread my influence over the child, though at first it was hard not to be allowed to touch her, when my heart so yearned towards her." She said nothing of the curses

and indignities which had been heaped on her—the slaves exaggerating the hatred of their mistress; nor of the death which nothing but Cyril's watchful firmness saved her from; nor did she tell the keen pang of loneliness which had smitten her when, in the first minutes of joyful reunion, Lucia had scarcely seemed to see the slave who stood drinking in her every look and word; that had been repressed at once as selfish and sinful, and forgotten in the cordial recognition which followed.

With Lucia one happy thought absorbed the rest. "Cyril!" she said, "it was like him; I knew you were safe with him—for I did think of you, Irene, though often my heart was so full of selfish hopes and fears;" and before the morning they were on board the little merchant vessel, and launched on the calm sea.

One by one the hills of Palestine faded into soft grey outline, and then disappeared altogether from their view, as they made for the coast of Cyprus; and when there was no longer anything to watch, Lucia looked around in a calm of thankful joy, and felt that all her treasures were with her, and the thought led to her saying some tender hopeful words to Shelomith and the orphans, which called up smiles in their sorrowful faces, as they turned from the coast they had been watching so painfully to answer her.

"There is but one thing, Cyril, I should have liked to save that book of our holy writings."

"*I have it here*," he said, laying her hand on his heart. And meeting his eyes, she read there a confirmation of her best hopes.

"This is the best joy of all," she murmured, as soon as the happy tears which choked her voice would let her speak. "Oh, Irene, I a martyr! I had not courage or faith to ask if this could be possible. This is the best joy of all."

And in calms on the broad blue Mediterranean, or at anchor among the sunny creeks of the Greek islands, the history of the months of separation was gradually unfolded to Lucia.

"I took up your sacred books again, Lucia," said Cyril. "I thought the hands which so diligently copied them for me might be cold and powerless; I knew the hopes they opened must have been your strength, and as I read them, the ice of my proud criticism melted, and my heart lay open to the truth. What more was needed?"

"You found Him!"

"I found myself revealed to me. All the dim wants and unnamed burdens under which I had been restlessly struggling were called by name, and, I felt, by the true name. I found all the philosophical names I had been giving to the things within me, and above me, were mere mists of words to hide the depths I could not fathom. I had been trying to count and name the stars, and after all the stars were countless, and my names mere human names, and meantime my household fire had gone out; I awoke from the

'abysses' amidst which I had been shivering, and the 'fulnesses' which left me an hungered. I found myself standing before the throne of God, with sin upon and sin within me, part of my being and nature."

"That was no gospel."

"Any abyss was less awful to gaze into than those holy omniscient eyes."

"But then——"

"Oh, Lucia, you know! I read of His unspeakable Gift. I saw Him who was in the beginning with God, who is God. I saw Him bleeding and forsaken on the cross, made a curse for us. I looked up, and in the heavens I saw Him again. The curse was gone, and the sin; and as the heavens were clear of it, so was my unburdened heart, for His blood cleanseth from all sin. I looked up, Lucia, through Him and in Him—beneath the cross I looked up throughout the universe, and met the gaze of a Father."

And Martia in a moment of confidence, with Ianthe playing near them, said—"I cried for you, Lucia, to all the gods in heaven; I offered them sacrifices; I wept and promised the most precious things I had; but the heavens were as iron, and I felt as if my clamours only exasperated them. How could a shade of grief sully the brow of an immortal? I seemed to hear from within the golden gates the sound of feasting and music, and I felt that no cry of human misery could be suffered to enter. So, in the

sullenness of my grief, I let Cyril read aloud in my presence from your books. It was of a man who had been dead four days; and He wept with the sisters. He spoke with a loud voice and raised the dead; but that was not so much to me—*He wept.* The words haunted me day and night—a God who could weep! And, scarcely knowing what I did I called on Him. It was the cry of despair, not of faith, Lucia; but He heard. I said—I shudder sometimes to think what I said. I made Him no promises, I offered Him no sacrifices—I felt as if they were all useless. I came to Him with nothing but my despair and my great need, and I entreated Him to have compassion on me, even on me."

"He was sure to hear."

"Yes, the strange thing was, the thing I asked for came not. You were still away. I knew not but that you were dead; yet I was sure I was heard. And by degrees I learnt to feel that He had given us so costly a gift, that beside that gift every blessing He can heap on us is as nothing. And so, Lucia, I learnt to trust."

Lucia's eyes filled with tears.

"The expiation, the sacrifice, the cross, the agony, were all His; our sacrifice, mother, is all thanksgiving—our worship is all joy."

* * * * *

"I told you it would never answer," said Nicias, as he rescued Martia from the rough caresses of little Ianthe. "I told you persecution

would never answer," he soliloquised, with an air of contented perplexity. They have made Lucia a martyr; and here are we, Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Pagans, in a fair way to follow her example. It is very unphilosophical; but I see no help for it. We shall have to attend catechetical lectures with our granddaughter, Martia!" —But as he pressed the child's soft cheek to his, there was a grave tenderness in his eyes which contradicted the lightness of his words.

Thus the little household of faith sailed forth on the "great sea," a living branch and type of the one redeemed Family, with all its varieties of history, and character. They left the shores where Polycarp died, and Ignatius* witnessed for the Christ he bore in his heart, and went westward among the Greek cities of the south of Gaul, where, not long afterwards, the martyrdoms of Vienne and Lyons revealed to history the treasures of faith which otherwise might have been unknown to us until the day of the manifestation of the sons of God. For seventeen hundred years these faithful witnesses have been resting with their Lord; and the approving love with which He welcomed them has not lost its first freshness. Yet, through the inconceivable repose of that "better" place, beams the deeper light of a hope which is "far better" still —the blessed hope of that day of Christ, when

* See Ignatius' answer to Trajan.

He shall enter into the fulness of His joy and all His redeemed with Him—when the creation shall be delivered from its long bondage, and earth and heaven be no more estranged. For this we on the battle-field also wait, and to this we haste. The age of martyrdom is not past. The faith which trusts God's love amidst every trial, and the love which acquiesces in His will, and confesses Him by rejoicing in Him at all times, are as dear to Him on the daily path as in the bloody amphitheatre. He has not left one member of his Church without some alabaster box of costly perfume, precious in His sight, however poor in ours, to break and pour on His feet. Every hour is testing whether it is the world, or "the disciples" we are seeking to please, or, before all, Him to whom we owe all. "Lovest thou Me more than these?" is the question asked us through every gift and privation, every joy and sorrow; and the one response which consecrates martyrdom as well as every lowly act of obedience is—"Lord, Thou knowest all things," my sins and the love against which I have sinned, yet "Thou knowest that I love Thee."

WAYSIDE NOTES

IN

THE DAYS OF CHRYSOSTOM.

WAYSIDE NOTES

In the Days of Chrysostom.

LETTER I.

THE haven is left, then, sweet mother, and thy son is launched on the broad ocean. What a haven it has been! I love, amidst the tumult and movement of this wide world, to enter again in memory the hallowed circle of our home. It is no magic mirror of things which have been or shall be which forms my talisman. That home still exists. My elder brothers, Paul and Theodore, call home the goats at evening from the upland pasture; the shadow of the mountain falls over the cottage, the green strip of grass in front of it, and the white beach at the rim of the lake; it creeps over the waves of the lake, and the meadows beyond, and swiftly climbs the opposite crags, pausing on one summit after another till only the snowy peaks glow and beam beyond its reach. And then Paul lays aside his herdsman's horn, and you stand on the shore with little Rhoda's hand in yours, and pray to Him whose glory never sets. Then you retire

to the cottage, and not a sound breaks the silence, till, at early dawn, when the sun comes forth from the subterraneous caves, and sends his first beams on that quiet resting-place on the hills where our beloved sleep in their tombs, before nature can rouse herself to anything beyond a faint murmur of welcome, you are awake, and the hills echo again and again with that worthy Name by which we are called. But, mother, when the stranger came and told us how the whole wide world was echoing with that Name, and earth responded in one song to the voice of the angels, was it not enough to make me long to go and see? I can fancy the joy of my grandfather, when, flying with his family from persecution, taking his flock with him, he was able to sound aloud the praises of the Christ, and, instead of curses for reply, hear the hills catch the syllables, and repeat them to one another—the hills which had sprung into being at His word. And then to find the truth, which Rome scorned, welcomed by the wild people around—and to see the light of God penetrating hearts which knew no other light—to watch a church rise in the wilderness—to lay bodies of saints to rest there until the hour of resurrection of the just—this was enough to bind him to the place. But other visions filled my infancy. You told me of cities and armies, and palaces, and a civilised world beyond our valleys. How often, when you thought I was hunting the chamois, have I

been wandering from Alp to Alp—threading gorges where scarcely a ledge remained above the torrent—climbing peaks, toiling over glaciers, not in search of game, but of a City. I passed nights on the peaks, hoping that the golden rays of sunrise or sunset might flash back to me, one day, from some of the gilded domes my grandfather spoke of. But I saw nothing; only sometimes, very far off beneath my feet, a circle bounded by no hills, that I knew was the world; but something always withheld my boyish steps from wandering further. It was the heathen world; the blood of martyrs had been shed there,—blood purer than that of martyrs had been poured out there—the Son of God had found no welcome but a cross there—the prince of darkness reigned there, and thence our fathers had fled to escape a cruel death. Fair and bright it was, yet enchanted ground. I thought of the old fable of the beautiful women beckoning mariners to the depths of the sea; I thought of the glittering snow lying lightly over the yawning mouth of an abyss, and I made the holy sign on my brow and breast, and said, "Not thee I serve, but Him thou didst crucify."

At times, also, I had other thoughts. Were there not tempest-tossed, wretched mariners there, as well as syrens? Were there not other footsteps besides mine on the edge of that abyss? The heroes walked where the deluded perished.

They also went forth into the enchanted gardens, but it was to conquer; and not to conquer merely, but to rescue. Had not the magician's wand been broken, and the enchanted captives been restored to their true shapes? As my youth passed on, these thoughts deepened in me. Had I not in my heart the message of peace? What if I could rescue some of the captives, and restore them to God's image, by that blessed Word which we know, and return to you; or, if not to you on earth, to Christ in heaven, with a train of rejoicing ones liberated by Him! The sea of mountains became more and more like a prison wall, and I longed to go forth and bear the glad tidings far and wide. It was for this I read the old volumes my grandfather had brought with him—Virgil and Seneca, and, still more, that old torn Plato, whose speech he had taught us, that we might read the Evangelists as they were written. I was learning the language of those I had the blessed message for—I was learning what they felt, and feared, and desired, that I might know how to offer what we had to give. Gradually that outside world changed in my visions, from an enchanted fairy-land to a battle-field, where men fought, and perished, and suffered; and when I scaled that one towering peak, which gave me the furthest prospect over the plain, I no longer crossed myself as a guard against its enchantments, and turned away mine eys, but signed myself with

the sacred sign as a soldier of the cross, and said in my heart, "Lord, I am ready; when wilt thou lead me forth against the enemy?"

But, doubtless, I was not ready; or He would not have delayed my going. Is not our time precious in His sight, who, though the ages are His, knoweth what a brief day is ours?

Then came the stranger to our mountain solitudes with the great news:—"'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ'—a Christian emperor sits on the throne of the Cæsars—Christian churches stand where stood the temples of the false gods—Christian hymns resound where unholy music profaned the air."

For a moment, the tidings fell on my heart like a rebuke. The victory was won. I had taken no share in the fight. But I repelled the mean and selfish thought. The victory was His—the lowly joy was mine. I would go forth and see this great thing which the Lord had done. Strange that all the earth had not trembled with joy at His triumph—that the mountains had not broken forth before Him into singing—that such a Sun should have arisen, and one corner of the world have lain hidden from the joy! For fifty years the world had become the inheritance of our King, and we had not known it. You all rejoiced and gave thanks that night, but a burning sense of wrong possessed me. I knew it to be sin; but I could not

struggle against it, or my feeble will would not. Was all the world full of this joy, and were we alone left in darkness? At length, thou wilt remember, my gloomy looks called forth thy loving questions then, and I told thee all. I see now the kind smile in thine eyes, mother, and I hear the tone in which thou saidst, as to an impatient child—

"Have none ever longed and waited but thou? Has that lesson first been made for thee? Did patriarchs, apostles, prophets, and martyrs, but look for the promise, and it came? Wilt thou be at the helm, or Christ? Wilt thou guide the winds and the waves, or God?

I was calmed, the mist was blown away, and I saw things again as they are. But I did not tell thee all I have written to thee now. I only said, "I must go into the world, and see the triumph of our King."

I thought to have met opposition; and therefore, when the time came to tell thee of my purpose, the fine arguments I had premeditated all vanished, and I could only find those few abrupt words. When I had said them, I could not meet thy eyes. I felt as a wilful prodigal in thy sight—we had been so used to obey thee, and to take thy looks as law.

But there was no word of reproof or dissuasion from thee; only a tender sadness in thy words, as thou answeredst me—

"I expected this, my son; thy father, also,

had this longing, and thou art most like him of all his children; thou hast struggled bravely against this impulse, but the time is come at last, and I must yield thee up. Thank God that thy childhood and youth have been spared to me."

All those years, then, thou hadst watched the aspirations I thought no human eye could see. The means of preparing for this intercourse with men which I had thought thrown accidentally in my way, had been placed before me by thy loving hands. What providence is like a mother's, but God? Nobler than the Spartan matrons, thou hadst thyself trained me for the service which was to rend me from thee. I was altogether subdued. I knelt before thee, and clasped thy hands to my breast. What could I not give up for thee?

But thou didst not shed a tear, but steadily thine eyes looked into mine, nor did any tenderness make thy voice tremulous, as thou saidst—

"Has not God taught me what it is to be the mother of Christian men? Should I detain thee by my side to see thy aims grow narrow, and thy heart weak, to feel I had kept thee from thy high work in my Lord's service for my sake, and to learn, by thy drooping energy and palsied feelings, that I was not enough for thee! No, my son; I have done my part God gave me in thy training. I have led thee as far as my feeble feet can go. I have lived for thee, for that was

God's work for me; thou must live for Him as He shall choose.

And I said, "Then thou wilt not grieve?"

"Did I grieve when thy brother Paul married—yet then he ceased to be mine? Am I so unworthy of the blessed office God gave me, as to have brought thee up for myself? Is it no joy to have some offering, my son, for God?"

"Then thou dost not deem my scheme a mad vision?"

"How know I but there may be nobler work in the world for thee than fishing in this lake, or hunting on these mountains? Can I forget Him who made His Apostles fishers of men?"

"But I am no Peter or Paul, mother!"

"Christ is thy Master," was thy reply—"follow the call. If He has no work for thee to do yonder, thou canst return."

But then the high purpose seemed to melt from thy eyes, and tears stood there instead.

"I go, then," I said, "with thy free will."

"With the fulness of a mother's blessing, and the constant following of thy mother's prayers," was thy answer; yet those words, begun so firmly, were ended in a low whisper, as thy arms clasped my neck, and thy tears fell on my breast

A week afterwards I was on my journey, with the travelling gear thy careful hands had provided from our poverty.

I have written to thee nothing but what thou knowest; but it seemed like talking with thee.

The mountains of my home are yet in sight, and I am still on the borders of the wide world. I must write to thee when I can, and send the parchments when I find an opportunity. They say there is a great imperial road, and a post station, about twenty miles from our lake. I shall send my letters thither, and Theodore must make a journey to fetch them from time to time. He must direct his course towards the north-west.

I have seen a City—a Christian City. I write these words with thousands of human hearts beating around me. The thought weighs on me with a sublimity greater than that of the grandest solitude. I stand by an overflowing river, whose drops are human lives. I look up to God amidst a host of human beings, each one of whom is more precious in His sight than the whole world of seas and hills, than the whole firmament of stars,—my brothers, His brothers. For what are the sublimest mountains and the richest valleys, rivers, glaciers, fertile meadows, compared with the heights and depths there are and may be in one human soul? There is such awe, and yet such joy in the sense of this, I cannot half utter it. When I first saw the white walls gleaming like a snowdrift across the plains of Lombardy, the sight made my feet like wings. I thought of the heavenly city descending out of heaven, having the glory of God. And as I drew nearer, the domes gleamed in the sunshine,

and above them was the Cross. I fell on my knees and praised God; but as I knelt, a sound like heavenly harmonies came rising and falling like a billow of music on my ear—like a wave of the crystalline sea breaking before the throne. I could not move until it paused, and then I asked a man who was passing what it meant.

"It is from Bishop Ambrose's cathedral," said he, "calling the people to morning prayer."

I asked if he was going.

He stared at me as if I were mad, and said, laconically, "Don't you see my team of oxen—do you take me for a priest?"

And, smiling as if he had said something witty, he passed on. But turning back, good-humouredly, he called to me—

"Don't take me for a Pagan. I shall be there at Easter; and I hope to be baptized before I die!"

Every word of his speech was an enigma to me. Pagan or countryman he certainly appeared to be, but what that had to do with Easter, or his being baptized, I cannot in the least imagine. However, the interview much disturbed my visions.

As I approached the gate of the city, a procession issued from it, carrying torches, and singing as they walked. I thought of the marriage ceremonies you told us of; but the faces of these men were grave, and the singing was solemn and slow. And as they passed close to

me, I saw among them a coffin, covered with a white pall, and borne on the shoulders of eight men. There were no noisy lamentations, no despairing cries—all spoke of hope and resignation. I could have known it was a Christian funeral before I heard a word they were singing. But it was sweet to catch the words of the hymn, as they answered one another in chorus—

"For precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

"Return to thy rest, oh, my soul, for the Lord hath rewarded thee."

"The memory of the just shall be blessed."

"The souls of the just are in the hand of the Lord,"

"I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

Many poor followed the train, weeping silently. Mothers, holding the hands of their little children, who tripped unconsciously along, carrying flowers to strew on the tomb.

I asked whom they were carrying to the grave.

"It is one of the deacons of Bishop Ambrose," was the reply. "We all loved him, he was so kind to all. He loved little children, and the poor were to him as his own brothers and sisters."

I could not help following the dead—was he not my brother also?

I could have wished the service at the grave more joyful--more of praise as for a victor, more of triumph as for a conqueror; less of

petition, more of thanksgiving. But, doubtless, there was more confidence in the hearts than in the words; and while they prayed he might rest in Abraham's bosom, many looked in faith beyond the veil where Christ, the anchor of our hope, is—saw Him there as I did, placed "in the bosom of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and all those who have pleased Thee from the beginning of the world; where there is no sorrow, grief, or trouble, but a place of rest for the godly, a land of quietness for the upright, and all who therein see the glory of Thy Christ."

After the burying, they celebrated the Supper of the Lord, with many ceremonies, strange to me, my ignorance of which, no doubt, made them ask me if I were baptized. But on my answering in the affirmative, they suffered me to partake; and among the graves, we shewed forth His death, whose coming all this precious dust awaits.

It was a strange introduction to the city. Too plainly it shewed this city was no heavenly Jerusalem, though one sacred Name might be honoured in both. Tears were there, and the hand that had wiped many away was cold. Poverty was there, and parting, and death. Then surely sin must be there—the terrible and abominable thing, of which all these are fruits or shadows. The last enemy is not yet put under His feet, though His reign of conquest is, they say, indeed begun. Then even here, and

now, some work must be left for His disciples, from the least to the greatest; and I have come for other purpose than to be the spectator of a triumph. Thank God, there is yet a little left to do in the world.

This city seems indeed full of the name of Christ. The names of the early disciples are the most familiar household names. Peter and Paul, John and Andrew and Philip, Mary and Martha, meet you at every turn, with others, expressive of some Christian truth, or acknowledging some blessing, in Greek or Latin idioms. My host is Resurrection, and his wife Immortality. One servant, the Gift of God; another, What God Will. His children, Peace, Truth, Wisdom, Barnabas, and Philemon. The people measure their year by Christian festivals, and look forward from the Epiphany to Easter, from Pentecost to the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, filling up the spaces with a number of minor landmarks, in honour of various saints and martyrs, like lamps lighted at regular intervals along the way of life. Everywhere is the sign of the cross; embroidered on the banners, painted on the houses, engraved on cups, and furniture, and jewels, surmounting the roofs, worn in every possible variety of device by the women,—it meets the eye wherever you turn Blessed if it is equally engraved on the heart within—on the heart where only One can see it! A city of Christians! I confess I see more tumult, and

pomp, and eager pursuits of trifles, than I could have expected; but I need only remember the failures in our little community at home, the forbearance needed even in our own happy family, the pardon daily needed by me, to explain this. A city of Christians on earth, tempted by the devil, will certainly be no choir of seraphim.

But the sight I have seen to-day is alone worth leaving our valley for.

I have seen the emperor of the whole world, the great Theodosius, prostrate himself like a sinful beggar on the pavement, at the threshold of the church. I have stood near enough to hear him say, in the low accents of repentance —"My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken Thou me, according unto Thy word." As he rose, I could have kissed the hem of his robe.

But thou must hear the whole history, to know why the sight was so overpowering. It was the last act of a long contest. I tell it you as it was told to me by a presbyter of the Portian Basilica without the gates. The halls of justice and public buildings, you must understand, and occasionally the temples, have now become the great places of Christian assembly.

"Not many years since, this Ambrose, the bishop, whose name is on every one's lips, was the governor of this province. When he was about thirty years old, not having yet been

baptised, yet, strange to say, being a Christian of unusual devotedness, the Bishop of Milan died; and the other clergy, dreading a tumult in the election of a successor (many heretics being in the city), entreated the young Emperor Valentinian to appoint one. The emperor declined. The city was plunged in tumult, and the cathedral became a scene of most disgraceful uproar. Party cries resounded where peaceful hymns and prayers only were wont to be heard, and there was danger of blood staining the place where the death of Christ was celebrated. In the climax of the tempest, the good governor arrived, and his energetic determination produced a temporary calm. The surges of human passion were lulled by the presence of the servant of Christ, and the calm was only broken by low whispers here and there, as of winds dying away in the distance. Suddenly the joyous voice of a little child rose in the silence—'Amprose is bishop!—Ambrose is bishop!' Surely his angel whispered it to him, fresh from looking on the face of God. The people were silent for a moment, and then taking the voice of innocence as the inspiration of the Holy One, they cried with one voice—'Ambrose is bishop!—Ambrose is bishop!' Thus Ambrose was elected. But the holy man could not so easily receive this as a call from God. He fled directly from the city, and was not heard of for days. The people, however, were determined. The emperor threat-

ened his severe displeasure against any who should conceal him, and we found our noble bishop at last. Once elected, no hesitation weakened his usefulness. Faithfully, as the priest and prophet of God, like Uzziah or Samuel of old, he has contended for the Temple of God. The Emperor Valentinian was an Arian heretic—I mean nothing disrespectful; though unbaptised, I believe he died in the bosom of the Catholic Church, and Ambrose believes his repentance was accepted. But the emperor's mother, Justina, was a bitter enemy of the faith. She required our bishop to give up one of the basilicas to her detestable sect. Ambrose had far rather have died; and all that Ambrose wills is law for his faithful flock. The court tried church after church, and failed. Were not the sacred buildings Christ's and should they be given up to be synagogues of Satan? Whenever it was known that the emperor had demanded a basilica, to that basilica the people thronged; and before the heretics could gain footing there, it was filled to overflowing with the Catholics. The last effort was made on our basilica without the gates. The imperial purple hangings were set up there, in token that the court no longer requested, but took possession. The Christians, however, were not to be thus baffled. Early in the morning the church was thronged. The soldiers surrounded the building, but the people filled it, and barricaded the doors."

"Was not that rather like a riot?" I ventured to ask.

The venerable priest looked suspiciously at me.

"Was it a riot when the Temple was closed against Athaliah? The basilica was the Lord's, —the Church his trustee, Ambrose her ruler!"

I saw that to hear more I must be silent; and the old man proceeded. "The soldiers also were Christians; they suffered the people to enter, but forbade them to leave. The whole city was in the most tumultuous agitation. Ambrose had been commanded to leave Milan; an assassin even had penetrated to his bedchamber. The family trembled for its head. Women wept, men threatened—the holy virgins and widows fasted and prayed—the most careless trembled. Only within the Portian Basilica all was calm. Night and day the faithful flock watched around their bishop. Happier in this than his Lord, none denied or forsook Ambrose. And he it was who turned the tumultuous assembly into a congregation of saints. Monica, the holy widow, the mother of Augustine, mingled her prayers and tears with those of the faithful there. And to many of us those days and nights of watching were as a foretaste of heaven. Every day the blessed sacrifice nourished our souls, and through the long hours of darkness, our hearts were kept awake by the new hymns which Ambrose then introduced among us, the antiphonal chanting long used as a Catholic weapon against Arians in

the East. Chorus responded to chorus in chanting the praises of the Sacred Trinity; our creed was glorified into a song, as with the angels announcing the Nativity; and our hearts were guarded, like the Israelites in the wilderness, by a pillar of fire, cheering the people, while it repelled the foe. Thus time passed on, and scarcely seemed time—each hour gliding to sacred melody—till the emperor gave up in despair, and the soldiers withdrew, sharing our triumph in their hearts."

"But that emperor is dead," I said.

"*Assassinated*," said the old man, solemnly; "but, as I said; Ambrose loved him, and is full of hope for his soul."

"And the Emperor Theodosius?" I suggested.

"He is indeed a true son of the Church," was the reply.

"It is nearly a year since his penance began, and patiently, all that time, has he waited till those in whose hands are the keys should open the sacred doors."

"What was his crime?"

"It was a terrible one. The citizens—or the mob—at Thessalonica, had murdered his general and several of his officers, in revenge for some imaginary wrong."

"The people seem to resist the imperial power everywhere," I said.

"This was a mere riotous mob," was the reply. "At first, the emperor pardoned the offence; but

evil councils prevailed. The Thessalonians were invited into a circus, as if for the games. Then the soldiers surrounded the circus, and commenced a massacre; in a few hours seven thousand were slain."

"That was, indeed, savage—the treachery of weakness added to the cruelty of power."

"The emperor, indeed, felt it was so; an edict of mercy was sent hastily after the edict of massacre, but before the pardon arrived, Thessalonica was laid waste. It is this outrage on humanity which Ambrose has opposed. Theodosius had been his personal friend; but when, after this act of blood, he attempted to attend divine service at Milan, he was met with all his imperial train on the threshold by the bishop; all the tenderness of friends merged in the dignity of the priest; and the emperor, and the court, with the people and clergy, heard the words of Ambrose as those of one of the prophets. He told Theodosius that dust was his beginning and his end; that the purple might beguile, but could not fortify him. 'Your subjects, emperor,' he said, 'are your fellow-servants—servants of one universal Lord and King, the Maker of the universe. Dare you, then, look upon His shrine, who is Lord of low as well as high,—dare you tread His holy pavement,—dare you stretch forth hands which are yet reeking with the blood of innocent victims? dare you receive in them the holy body of your Lord? dare you

taste His precious blood with lips which have spoken their rage in an unjust slaughter? Go hence, add not a new offence to what is past! Submit to the bond which is placed on you according to the will of the Most High. Take it as medicine to restore your soul.'

"The emperor retired like a rebuked child. For months he remained banished from the house and table of the Lord,—not indifferent, but an exile everywhere, because shut out from the kingdom of God. At length, at Christmas, he made one more effort to attend divine service. Again Ambrose refused. The emperor, humbled in the dust for his crime, his soul quieted as a weaned child, met the bishop in his episcopal residence, and submitted to all his holiness imposed. Then Milan beheld her sovereign prostrate in public humiliation, a penitent before his God. To-day the prodigal is restored, and the provisions of the Father's house are open to him once more."

It was after this, my mother, I beheld the penitent emperor prostrate himself on the threshold of the church. Afterwards I saw another proof of his humility. The table—or altar, as they call it—where the sacred bread and wine are distributed, is divided from the rest of the church by rails. The space within is called the sanctuary. The emperor, after offering his oblation, was about to remain within, as I am told he would in the Eastern churches to receive the

cup of blessing; but Ambrose motioned him without signifying that the sanctuary was sacred to the priests of God; and the sovereign meekly withdrew.

My brain is in a perfect whirl this evening with new words and sights, incense, chants, priests, moving about in white, and gold, and purple robes, signed with the sacred sign, bearing jewelled stoles and chalices. Sometimes I fancy it is a dream, and I am in Palestine in the days of the temple and the Levitical priesthood. Then the words "Arian," "catholic," "bishop," "priest," "eucharistic sacrifice," "altar," "body and blood of the Lord," ring strangely through my head. It is a long process this of reconciliation to the Church—a good deal longer than the reconciliation of the prodigal to his father, or of the woman who was a sinner to her Saviour Ambrose seems an heroic man; as great a hero as any of the old Greek or Roman martyrs for freedom; and this spiritual power, without arms overcoming all arms, mighty through its weakness, is sometimes sublime. But one thing is clear to me—I had rather be Theodosius than Ambrose; the penitent emperor, than the triumphant priest; the sinful man receiving the sacred feast, than the sinful man distributing or withholding at his will. But, mother, we are neither, —sinners, but not shut out from the sanctuary; penitent and lowly believers, but dependent on no human hands for the bread of life.

My perplexities increase with my information. If Ambrose's position is unlike St. Paul's, it is a noble one; and since St. Paul's time, things are changed; to be a Christian is no longer a disgrace or a danger, but a passport to everything that is highest in the state. To be a bishop is no longer to be the offscouring of all things, but the idol of the people, and the lawgiver of emperors. With no power but what is rooted in the soul, these spiritual rulers stand forth as noble witnesses to the spiritual nature of man. And Ambrose seems entirely above all selfish uses of this mighty instrument: with no family to found, he looks on his episcopal property as held in trust for the poor; and they say his great delight is to retire unostentatiously from all the pomp and honour of his station in the city to an institution he has formed without the gates—a company of holy men who have banded together to spend their lives in the service of God by prayer, and thanksgiving, and alms. His house is always open, and there he is accessible to all. The secular duties of his office must be numerous,—the mere stewardship of alms which is his, and the control of his numerous clergy; yet he seems able to throw himself wholly into those higher duties which are his, in common with the meanest pastor of a village church. The hymns with which the churches resound are his; the very music is of his introducing; his sermons sway the minds of the people, like a firm hand

on the rudder of a skiff. His nature is so manifold, that variety of intense occupation is the only rest he needs. Tribune of the people, spiritual counsellor of the emperor, minister of the gospel, almoner of the rich, governor of the clergy, pastor of the poor,—he gives himself to each work as if that were all he had to do. He needs at once to be a Cicero, an Augustus, and a St. John. He needs certainly to be a great many things St. Paul does not seem to have contemplated, when he wrote his portrait of what a bishop must be; and St. Paul certainly seems to have contemplated his bishop being one thing Ambrose must on no account be—"the husband of one wife." For among all his gifts and virtues, I find I have omitted the one which seems here to constitute his highest title to sanctity—he has never married.

There was a great festival at Milan to-day. An old officer of rank was baptized. He had long been a catechumen; but being ordered on a campaign against the barbarians of the North, he resolved, before encountering fresh dangers, to declare himself fully a Christian. I cannot quite understand this. If baptism is a blessing, why delay enjoying it? If confession of Christ be a duty, why delay making it? Yet one may conceive, that the more earnest the character in these days of peace, the more scruples might attend such an act.

The service was to take place in the new

church, because they said the candidate had an especial reverence for the Saints Gervasius and Protasius, whose relics had lately been transported to the building. This also perplexes me. First, they deem it necessary to set apart a little piece of God's earth especially to belong to him, and then they deem it fitting to make this separated portion of his creation holy enough for the Creator's use by burying the bones of two sinners there, redeemed from ruin by His blood. We had thought the whole universe consecrated by the word which created it, by the presence of its God. My mountain training comes back on me; and these shrines—these basilicas seem narrow, and low, and monotonous, and perishable indeed, to be called the dwelling-places of God. I cannot dwell on the ceremonies of the baptism; indeed I should scarcely have known it was a baptism, unless I had been told—so many were the ceremonies which preceded and followed it. There was the turning to the West to renounce the devil; the turning to the East to confess Christ, an exorcising of the candidate by one robed priest, anointing him by another, breathing on him by a third; and so many other forms, that the apostolic "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" seemed a very minor part of the proceedings: yet much of this would, doubtless, not have been new to my grandfather—only in the solitude,

amidst the mountains, these courtly ceremonies and pomps have been simplified among us. I long to ask information, but I am half afraid; on any question of the kind, they look suspicious, and ask if one is an Arian, or a semi-Arian, or a Novatian, or a Donatist, or a hundred other things which I certainly cannot be, as I never heard of them before. But their confidence is gone, and the conversation drops. The question is not, "Are you a Christian?" but, "Are you a Catholic?" Now, a Catholic I surely am,—I sing with my whole heart the Catholic hymns, I repeat with my whole soul the Catholic creeds; yet I cannot get rid of the sensation that if, at table, in crossing myself, I use the uncatholic gesture, or the uncatholic number of fingers, or at church fail to bow when I ought, or bow when I ought not, they will look on me as a heretic in disguise. I expected to come among a family which would welcome me with open arms, and I find myself in the midst of family quarrels, in which I make half the world my enemies, if I take any side, and all if I take none.

To-morrow I leave Milan. I have been here scarcely three months, yet with what a change of feelings I leave it! This evening I went into the fields, away from men and churches, Catholics and heretics, clergymen and laymen, and all varieties of men, to breathe freely, to feel myself once more a redeemed man before my God, and

to Him I could say, "Thou knowest all things, and I know scarcely anything, but no misunderstanding shall shut me out of Thy heaven; no mistake as to the mysterious depths of Thy incomprehensible nature shall close the Father's heart against the child. I believe in Thee, I believe in Thy Son, I rest on Thy love which gave Him, I rest on His love who bore the curse of the holy broken law for me. What can separate me from Thy love? Lord, Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Mother, I cannot tell you the joy of that hour. To feel nearer to God than to any human being, to feel united to Him in a union no man can come between, to feel bound to Him by a bond no power in the universe can break, to breathe His air, to tread His earth, to gaze up into His firmament a freedman in Christ,—this is freedom. If men could only work in the cities, and pray among the mountains, surely ecclesiastical architecture, and ecclesiastical parties, would occupy a much smaller place in their thoughts, and God a much greater. Yet, perhaps, this is *my* superstition; not mountain solitudes, or quiet fields at eventide, any more than cathedrals, are God's holy places. I *know* He owes but two especial dwelling-places—the heaven of heavens, and the lowly and contrite heart; not solitude brings us near Thee, but prayer; not nature is the Sanctuary, but Thy presence. From the place where I walked among the elms, where

the vine-leaves and the thick clusters of grapes hung their rich festive garlands from tree to tree, the faint blue of the northern mountains was relieved against the glow of sunset. I looked fondly on them. It was like gazing on the walls of our home. But, mother, my desire is still onward into the world. There may be something for me to do there; there is much for me to learn. I have not found what I expected; I scarcely know what I have found. One perplexity rises after another, and there is no one to explain; but these perplexities seem strangely to solve many perplexities within, and truths which I possessed, but knew little of, stand out in clearer light, and more divine permanence, the more the darkness and tumult increase. Are not perplexities steps in the ladder of faith; do we not owe the creeds to the heretics?

LETTER II.

MY journey from Milan to Rome has occupied some weeks. I wished to see what the people were in the rural districts, and therefore I broke off continually from the great imperial roads, and struck into bye-paths among the mountain-chains, or along the sea-shore—through fishing villages perched on rocky ledges above the Mediterranean, and by hamlets among the recesses of the Apennines, where they speak a language and retain customs little varied, I imagine, from the days when Rome arose a new settlement beside the old Etruscan and Latin cities. Most of the considerable towns, indeed, have their coronet of villas crowning their picturesque heights, and adorning the valleys around with their vine-terraces and orange-gardens, and olive-grounds, and corn-fields, and their men moulded according to the fashions of the day. But in the depths of society, as in the depths of the ocean, there is little movement. Necessities leave no room for fashions; and in the recesses of the earth human life seems to partake of the unwearying monotony of nature. Human his-

tory is like natural history—ever fresh to the individual, yet to the observer offering little but the uniform characteristics of a species. So many eras co-exist in one.

In one remote fishing village I found them sacrificing to the old gods, and devouring the entrails of their victims, although this is forbidden under the severest penalties; but the fishermen's wives, the fate of whose husbands was the object of their augury, for the time at least were in greater fear of the ocean deities than of the emperor, and preferred braving the edict to irritating the winds. In another village among the Apennines, the crags near which were excavated like the grottos of many monks, I found the inhabitants using other protections against evil. The women and children wore fragments of the Gospels, or relics of saints, around their necks; and sick cattle were branded with the sign of the cross. On asking the reason of this, I was told it was a spell against the evil spirit. It seemed to me as if the powers done homage to in both cases were in reality much the same—only in the latter instance they were called by the right name. Belief in devils, at any rate, seems very prevalent. I could not help telling the owner of the diseased animal, who had adopted this mode of defence, that God—the merciful and gracious One—was infinitely mightier than all the devils; that Christ had overcome them, and prayer to him was the true way of

resisting the Evil One. He seemed impressed, and asked me to teach him a prayer for his cattle.

His little boy was running by his side. I looked at the child. I asked him if there was nothing dearer to him than his cattle. He smiled, and said—"It is for their sakes I care about the beasts: how else could we live?" I tried then to make him understand the love of God, and told him the parable of the prodigal son, the unspeakable gift which God had given to us, and how safely we may trust Him for the rest. He said it was beautiful to hear about.

"But then," he added, after a pause, "there is the eternal fire. How are we to escape that?"

I lifted up my heart in prayer, and, as well as I could, explained to him the Cross, who endured it and why. The tears rolled over his brown face as I spoke; and at last he said—"Then the Almighty God loves us!" I could add no more. Who can doubt the devil's power when we see that the hardest thing in the world for man is to trust God? Who can doubt the reality of the evil which alienates us from our Creator, when we see everywhere this ghastly cloud of fear obscuring the heavens, nowhere pierced but by the Cross of the Son of God?"

A little further on, I encountered a band of wild-looking men, with pickaxes and clubs in

their hands, singing psalms, or rather shouting at the top of their voices, such verses as—"Make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind; as the fire burneth a wood; as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; so persecute them with thy tempest; make them afraid with thy storm," brandishing and striking their weapons as an accompaniment. I let them pass, and then asked the last on what errand they were sent.

"They have been offering their impious sacrifices, and we are hastening to destroy the houses of Satan," was the reply. They were going to the fishing village I had left. I told them what I had seen of the fierce and determined character of the inhabitants. "Shall we know fear in the battles of the Lord!" he exclaimed. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." And tossing his club in the air, and catching it again his muscular arms, he rushed after his troop. I stood and watched them till the last wild figure disappeared round the edge of the crag I was climbing, and long afterwards their savage shouts echoed among the rocks. These were the first monks I had come in contact with, though their grottos and cells had been pointed out to me on many a bare and rugged height. These, surely, are the missionaries who spread this fear of hell and the devil, which the poor villagers take for Christianity.

One month after this, however, I met, and our intercourse was such as makes me content, indeed, to leave my home—would make me content to be homeless for ever. Late one evening, after the weariest and wildest journey I had endured, on rounding a cliff of the Apennines spreading into the sea, instead of the fishing village I had hoped to see cowering on the sands or perched on some neighbouring height, nothing lay spread before me but a wild rocky gorge, crowned with pines. At the head a mountain torrent leaped over the precipice, and beyond the valley sloped up into the higher chain of hills which towered into the gray distance behind. The dash of the waves, the cry of the sea-birds, the distant, sullen plunge of the cascade, were the only sounds which broke the silence; and as my eye swept the horizon, not a single sign of human life could I discern. I therefore seated myself cheerfully on the nearest plot of grass; drew out my black bread, and my flask of water, and gave thanks for the health which made any food and any resting-place welcome. As it grew darker, however, a little light twinkled among the pines above the cascade. It grew brighter; and when the moon arose, so as to guide my steps, I made rapidly for it, till only the narrow ledge, beneath which the torrent lept into the chasm, separated me from it. One spring, and I stood on the opposite ledge, and penetrated into the cave where the light shone.

Before the sudden light enabled me to see, a hollow voice greeted me with the equivocal salutation—

"In the name of the Holy One, what art thou?—angel, devil, or man?"

"A man and a Christian," I replied.

"I thank Thee, O God!" replied the voice, more feebly; "I shall be buried by man, and not devoured by wild beasts."

By this time I could see a pale, emaciated frame, clothed in a sheep-skin, worn over a hair-shirt, stretched on a couch of ashes, at the further end of the cave. Not a vestige of furniture was to be seen. The hollow eyes opened again, and gazed wistfully on me, and then on the lamp.

"I should not have been able to light it again," he said; "it would have been sad to have sunk into darkness before my eyes grew dim; but," raising his eyes and hands in an attitude of self-reproach, he added—"Thou art my light, O Lord! forgive me that I desired any beside Thee."

I knelt beside him, and took his thin hand, and whispered—

"Was it not thy Lord who guided my steps to thee?"

"Your tones and touch are gentle as my mother's," he replied, fixing a long, searching look on me, and then came again a fixed, deprecating gaze upward.

I did not venture to disturb his meditations, but, commending him and myself to God, I rose, and spreading my cloak near him, left him undisturbed by seeming to sleep.

Seeming, to my wearied eyelids, soon became a reality; yet through my sleep I preserved an uneasy sense of having something to watch, and whenever I awoke I met those earnest, searching eyes fixed on me, yet averted whenever they met mine. At length the sense of that gaze was over me, waking or sleeping, and became intolerable; so that, at the first symptoms of morning, I went into the fresh air. Was he a murderer? Was there some wrong on his conscience it might relieve him to confess? The shortest road seemed to me, in such a case, the only one, and returning to his couch of ashes, I said—"You appear wretched; is there any message I could bear to any one?"

"God forgive me if I seem wretched," he replied; "I should be very happy, for all my hope is in Him; but it is ten years since I have looked on a human face."

"What banished you thus," I asked.

"Sin," he replied, "and the desire to live nearer to God."

"What command of His was there left to fulfil in this solitude?"

"One that I have never been able to fulfil," he replied—"'Crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts.'"

I shuddered. Ten years of living death, and still he appeared young! He rose on his couch, and exclaimed passionately—"And not a step gained yet; all my patience and labours, nights of watching, fastings until I could scarcely swallow, and feared to be guilty of self-murder, sacrifice of everything on earth—lost, lost—and this stranger's voice, O God! sweeter to me than Thine. All lost!"

"Yes," said I, "and no wonder. You, a feeble, sinful mortal, have been trying to do work which cost the Son of God more than life —*to put away sin by the sacrifice of life.*"

The wild, wandering gaze became fixed, and after an hour's silence he said—"Is it so? has my life been a blasphemy—a blasphemy against the mercy of my God and the cross of my Saviour?"

"Fear not," I said; "that sin also he has put away *by the sacrifice of Himself.*"

There was another pause, and then he said—"Read to me." I took the precious roll from my breast it cost us so many winter evenings to transcribe, and read the Word of Life, only pausing now and then to moisten his lips and my own, until I felt really exhausted with hunger, and reproached myself for neglecting his poor, feeble frame. He pointed me to a store of roots and fruit on a ledge of the rock, apologising, with the courtesy of a host, for his neglect. But when I had finished my own meal, at his urgent request, and was preparing

his, he impatiently checked me, and pointed again to the volume. I resolutely laid it aside, and asked if he would add another self-torture to so much lost labour, or receive God's gifts like a grateful child, and send Him back a thanksgiving. A peaceful smile beamed over his face, and he took the food from me. But that long-banished sense of rest—that smile from the heart, seemed to unbind a coating of iron armour from his heart. The first permitted natural emotion of years brought another, and he hid his face and burst into tears.

"Was it all then in vain?" he murmured. "Might I have lived with her, my widowed mother? might I have yielded to her prayers, and been as near God? What a miserable self-seeking my saintliness has been!"

I led him on, by way of calming him, to tell me every detail of his old home life, till I thought I could find my way blindfold to the street in Rome in which his mother lived, and recognise her among a crowd. Then, seeing the feverish flush return, I offered to read again, and read on for hours, until, on looking up to seek his sympathy in his glance, I saw he was asleep. When he awoke he was distressed at his own inattention.

"How cold my heart must be!" he said.

I reminded him of the Lord sleeping amid the storm. "You cannot praise Him day and night *yet*."

"All my labours dross beside His cross," he exclaimed, after a silence; "and all my sins as white as snow in His blood!"

At another time he said, with a smile—"I shall have no hymn in heaven but 'Thou art worthy,'—I shall have no crown to cast at His feet,—but I can cast *myself* there."

What days and nights those were. They are over now; he is buried where he lay. I filled up the entrance of the cave with stones. Henceforth no light shall beam thence on the wanderer among the Apennines; no voice shall break its stillness, but that human Voice which all tombs shall open. And if perchance in Rome I find his mother, I will be her son, and yet not cease to be thine.

This monastic spirit, devastating so many homes, and desecrating the rest, to what will it grow?

This question was in my mind when, some days after all this happened, I was walking along a public road, not far from the city where Cæsar lived, and St. Paul died. A light, two-wheeled car darted rapidly past me; but, pausing immediately afterwards, the occupant offered me to come and sit beside him. His kindness drew out my confidence, and I told him something of my history and perplexities, with the story of the dying monk of the Apennines.

"Have patience," he said; you will see other practices that may perplex you as much. If you

wonder to see that the valour of the soldiers of Christ consists in flying rather than fighting; if you wonder to find men imagining they serve God by refusing to serve the churches, what will you say if you see a little dust honoured as you might honour the risen body of the Lord—when you see men who think they are doing great honours with their paltry wax-tapers to the blessed martyrs, whom the Lamb, in the midst of the throne, illuminates with all the brightness of His majesty!"

We drew near the imperial city, and my friend desired his charioteer to stop.

"You must not enter Rome with me," he said; "it might shut every door against you, and you must learn and teach." Then, in answer to an inquiring look of mine, he added—"My name would be of no use to you. A correspondent of mine," he added, with an irony which had more of amusement than bitterness, could provide you with several. 'Madman,' 'Nemean Lion,' 'Adulterator of Wine,' 'Dormitantius,' 'The Innkeeper of Calagorris'—you may hear of me again by one of these appellations."

And he drove off; but, pausing in a few minutes, called me to him, and said—

"If ever Vigilantius of Gaul, the steward of Sulpicius Severus, the biographer of Martin of Tours, could be of any service to you, give him the pleasure of helping you in any way in his

power. But if you meet me in the street, do not recognise me, do not mention my name; for it might do you harm, and could be of no service either to me or to the Master you serve."

And placing a piece of parchment in my hand, with directions where to find him, he was out of sight in a minute.

I seated myself by the roadside to meditate my next step, the words of the stranger ringing in my ears. But looking up, and seeing the mass of walls and towers and palaces rise before me, I felt as if I were visibly entering on a new era of my existence in passing through those gates. Tumultuous sounds reached me from within the walls, louder and more broken than the ordinary hum of a city—tempestuous bursts and sullen pauses, with a low, angry roar beneath all, like the sea in a storm. When I reached the gate, groups of armed men were stationed there, and I was seized by each shoulder—two eager voices shouting in my ears, "For Damasus or Ursinus?"

To my relief, my two assailants speedily turned to an angry debate with one another, and a brisk little man came up between us, exclaiming—

"Shame on you, for thus greeting a stranger! Cannot you see that his excellency needs first to equip himself after his journey?"

And the little tailor drew me into his shop.

"Which fashion would your magnificence pre-

fer? We have some charming things fresh from Constantinople, approved by the Emperor himself. Ah! not that? Well, Rome is, after all, the empress city; and, in confidence, I confess the Orientals are a little behind—uncivilised, in fact—only some people will not look at anything that has not the court stamp."

Bewildered beyond measure, I was marching out of the shop, when a country man, laden with fruit-baskets,—a man of a fine Roman mould, having sold his fruit, taunted the tailor thus—

"You a Roman! and to be thinking of your paltry dresses and mantles when the fate of Rome is at stake, and the flock without a shepherd."

"You!" groaned the little man, between his teeth, "to pretend to concern yourself with such matters, when every one knows you have not a Christian in your family!"

Leaving them to their quarrel, I passed on. The city was, indeed, in an uproar. Every street was full. Women vociferating, children screaming, priests in their robes, soldiers, monks in wild shaggy garments, taunts, retorted by insults or blows, eyes flashing, arms brandished,—I could have fancied myself in the midst of some ancient popular tumult, and half expected to hear some orator haranguing in praise of liberty, and against the patricians, and to see the old standards waving. Yet it struck me there were more words than wounds. There was plenty

of haranguing; Rome, mistress of empires, and her free citizens were liberally appealed to; but with the old popular cries were mingled others which jarred strangely with these—"People of Christ," "True sons of the Catholic Church," "Shepherd and flock." The discord was intolerable; and seeing the door of a basilica, I turned in there as into a place of refuge. I might as well have leapt from the ship into the waves to escape the tempest. Here the fight was indeed terribly earnest, and amidst the names of every variety of heretic, were mingled the terrible yells and groans of dying men, and the clash of deadly battle. Scores of bleeding bodies already lay on the sacred pavement. I turned in disgust from the threshold. The street was clear when I regained it. A band of stalwart, half-intoxicated Gothic soldiers were reeling through it, clearing the way with their muscular arms and legs in a manner neither of the contending parties found it convenient to resist. One of them as they passed roughly pulled aside the veil of a young girl who was hurring timidly by. I placed myself between them, so as to give her time to escape. In an instant one strong clenched hand struck my breast, whilst the other grasped my shoulder.

"Boy, who appointed thee chief magistrate?"

"The same that would have appointed thee in a similar case," I replied, in the Gothic used by the tribes of our mountains.

His grasp relaxed, and he said, with a good-humoured laugh—

"Did you not know, boy, that I could have felled you with one blow to the earth?"

"Probably you might," I replied, measuring his gigantic frame with my eye, and half amused at my own audacity—"in such things one does not stop to measure forces."

"Well done, boy!" he said, heartily grasping my hand; "there is some Asa blood in thee, I trow. I meant the child no harm. We have no homes in these cities, and we grow savage. I thank thee."

"Noble savages, at least," I said to a Roman near me.

"Arians!" he exclaimed, contemptuously—"Arians to a man!"

A blow on the face from my Gothic friend interrupted these observations.

"Call me Arian again, if you dare! Have I not been blessed by Athanasius, the bishop, and slain hundreds of heretics and Vandals with my own hands? Did you believe that lie, boy?"

"Not in the least," I replied; "I had no suspicion you were a Christian."

"As good as these Italian cowards, at any rate," was the reply; and the Goth passed on.

"If these Goths were really Christians!" I thought, following his fine manly form and frank countenance.

So the day wore on, and the tumult died

away. I rested on the steps of one of the great baths; and Damasus was proclaimed Pope.

As I was sitting, a slave kept passing and repassing me. At length he came up to me, and said—"Thou art the stranger who defended the Lady Marcella to-day? Follow me; her ladyship's father wishes to speak to thee."

I had no fancy for being overwhelmed with thanks I had done so little to merit; but I followed the man to a villa near the summit of one of the hills, where the houses were scattered thinly, and seemed mostly of the largest sort. At the entrance, a bath and rich dress awaited me; and thus metamorphosed, I passed through gardens, and marble courts, and gilded and painted saloons, to a hall, or rather portico, where sate an old man with a maiden leaning her hand on his shoulder. She recognised me with a slight blush and smile, and he greeted me with a mixture of pride and thankfulness, and desired me to be seated.

They were alike; the same commanding height —the same resolute and open cast of features— the same dark and penetrating eyes; but the firm expression of her lips was relieved by the smile which often played about them.

Conversation followed, and then a meal, of which I ate alone, and had time to observe the beauty of the palace where I sate. Beauty, rather than pomp, seemed the taste of the in-

habitants. In all the sober frescos and rich furniture, there was nothing to distract the eye from the glorious view beyond the balcony, where Nature glowed in all the imperial pomp of the sunset, purpling the hills, and scattering her crimson and gold over river and fountain, portico and pinnacle. Gladly, for other reasons, also, my eye turned to the scene without. Within, every association, and symbol, and painting, was entirely Pagan—without, the hills and palaces glowed beneath the touch of the hand of God. In the conversation of my hosts, it was the same; they listened with interest to my histories of our mountain-life. Only the Name dearest to us threw a chill over their manner; and yet this absence, even this avoidance of holy names, was less shocking to me than their desecration on every lip as party-cries. I consented, gratefully, therefore, to remain as their guest. Olybrius and Marcella insisted that we were in some way connected; and thanks to certain hiatuses in the family genealogy, and the assertions of Marcella's nurse, I am established as a cousin. The other day they wished to make a feast on my behalf, to introduce me to my Roman cousins. I declined, saying a Christian would not share the Pagan festivities.

"Oh, you are quite mistaken," said Marcella; "half our acquaintances are Christians. They don't give us up, because we entertain well; and you know we may be converted! But are

you a real Christian? You seem to me more like a philosopher."

"A Christian, from my inmost heart."

"Well, I like people to be what they are heartily."

"You are not a real believer in the ancient gods?"

Her face changed to an expression I had not seen on it before; and she said—

"I suppose no one ever was. Are not all human religions faint attempts to express the unutterable? But of the two expressions, I choose the glorification of Nature, rather than the jargon of empty names they call Christianity. And I hate the wild troops of idle monks, and those pictures of a God delighting in pain. Better far the beautiful grand old deities delighting in beauty—better to worship the glorious sun and the stars, and Nature, always fresh, than the dust of dead fanatics!"

"There, at least," I replied, "you are unjust. It is not the dust they honour, but the heroism."

"Tell me honestly," she said, "was not the old morality of self-denial, family virtues, and heroic patriotism, better than this contented sinning on till death is in sight and then washing away the sins of a lifetime in a little water, on the one hand; or becoming a mere wild beast, like the monks?"

How indignantly I would have repelled her accusation a few weeks since, not as a caricature,

but as a wild misapprehension! Now, however, the remembrance of the deferred baptisms, and the indignant assertion of orthodoxy by those who had no regard for morality, paralysed my words, and I only said—

"This thing you hate is not Christianity, any more than the religion you love is the old Paganism. It was a religion of fear, not of joy—a painful depreciation of dangers by sacrifices, not a loving yielding of the heart to God; and I believe it is this religion, or rather this superstition, which, under other names, possesses the mass of the people, rich and poor, now. I am sure, however, there are thousands in these days who worship God with an adoration, and rejoice in Him with a joy, Marcella, you have never known."

"Where is this ideal Christianity of yours to be found?"

"Perfect," I said, "in theory, in our Holy Scriptures—its practice, in heaven; in broken reflections, in every Christian home and heart on earth."

Usually, however, our lips were sealed on this subject, save when Olybrius gave vent to an old man's lamentations on the degeneracy of the times, or Marcella uttered some poetical paganism. I soon became too accustomed to the silence.

One evening, however, I overheard a conversation between the steward and Marcella's nurse, which restored me to my senses.

"Give the hand of the Lady Marcella to a beggar from the mountains?" said he.

"We shall see what we shall see," was the oracular reply.

The next morning I signified, with many thanks, my intention of leaving. Olybrius made some polite objections, but did not look distressed; Marcella said nothing. As I took leave, Olybrius pressed on me a richly embroidered purse, which I declined. Marcella would scarcely say anything to me, only in a careless tone—

"When you discover your ideal republic of Christians, let us know."

"The Lady Marcella will find the ideal where I found it," I replied.

She turned coldly away; but ere I reached the next room, she came after me, her patrician haughtiness vanished, and with the childlike frankness which had so charmed me in her manner, she said—

"I have been ungenerous; you risked much for me, when we knew nothing of each other. You will not refuse this little purse—I embroidered it for you. I shall miss you very much; for I have neither brother nor sister."

Tears fell unrestrained over her face. It was my turn to be silent now. I could only say—

"I shall give the money to the Christian poor, and the purse I will not give to any one."

And I ventured to offer her a strip of that precious volume I always carry. It contained

the Gospel of John. At the door, I resumed my old travelling dress, greatly to the distress of the slaves. It might be pride; but I felt it safer to place as wide an outward distance as I could between my self and that house—between that fortnight of enchanted life and the future. A strange prosaic dulness seemed to have crept over the world. I felt I had erred in remaining so long in that Pagan atmosphere; and with a prayer and a vigorous effort, I turned my steps to the house of the widowed mother of the monk of the Apennines.

LETTER III.

THE widow Ursula's house was in a very different quarter of the city from that of Olybrius,—more, however, because she chose to live among those who needed her help, than from any need of her own. Her mourning robe, and still more her calm, venerable face, made a guard of honour for her, under whose protection she could penetrate into the lowest haunts of misery. Of all the acquaintances I have yet made, mother, I most desire to introduce her to thee. Thou wouldst not I am sure, as I did, have involved thyself in discussions with her, which made her full of maternal anxieties as to my orthodoxy.

My introduction to her was such as at once to bring me far within the circle of mere acquaintanceship. I brought her the relics she herself had hung around the neck of her son.

Her pale face lost, in an instant, all its faint remains of colour as I presented these to her; but with an effort dictated by her Roman blood, and aided by her Christian fortitude, she merely bowed her head, and said—"My God! in this also I would give thanks." Gradually as I told

her incident after incident of those days, feelings more simply human, and it seemed therefore to me more Christlike, replaced the stoicism of her first words, and she sate letting the natural tears rain over her cheeks, till, hiding her face in her hands, as she pressed the relic to her lips, she said, "Forgive me, O God! if, in the grief of a mother, I forgot the glory of being the mother of a saint!" I told her how his heart had yearned for her, and how, if his life had been given him again, he said it should have been spent near her.

But this did not seem to console her. She said through her sobs—

"Would I have withheld my son—my only son—from heaven? God forbid. I may have wept, and at first my heart may have shrunk, but indeed I gave him up without grudging. Better," she continued, clasping her hands fervently in her face, "to have such a son dead, than ten living in the world!"

The expressions of self-renunciation I related to her evidently seemed to her not the symptoms of the commencement of a higher life, but of the consistent close of a life of self-renunciation; and while she rejoiced in his death as a Christian, his crowning glory in her eyes plainly was that he had lived a monk.

The system of her age was to her divine—no effort of mine could have made her doubt it; and, wrong or right, after that first interview I did not try; for to her, while resting for her

own salvation simply on the Saviour, her belief in the sanctity of monastic life merely resulted in a lowly, unenvying, admiring gaze on those for whom heaven had heights her feet could not hope to attain. She beheld her son among the glorious train whose praises should sound sweetest, and whose steps should follow closest the heavenly Bridegroom, the bodyguard of heaven. For her, was it not reward surpassingly sweet and satisfying to bow her head in adoring gratitude below, and know his voice was among that chorus? Therefore I, believing both would owe their all of paradise to One, and both would find their highest glory and joy in the deepest self-renouncing adoration, contentedly left her to her visions, and him to his place before those blessed feet, whose garment we also hope to touch,—beneath those gracious eyes whose gaze we also trust will rest one day on us.

Ursula's life was a very active one; half the day she was in the hospitals, or among the poor, and the other half the sick and poor were commonly applying to her for help; or the rich were seeking her advice as to the distribution of their property, or the direction of their families. The days I passed under her lonely roof were rich in teaching for me. Ursula had little time to enter into my perplexities, and less discrimination to solve them. If I asked her any question which for the moment perplexed her, concerning the origin of any practice, or its

accordance with the Scriptures, she commonly ended by referring to the Presbyter Matthew Now, the Presbyter Matthew's solutions seldom reached beyond the appeal to the present and past as far as his own seventy years' experience had revealed to him its history. "Thus it is, and thus it has been; I never remember it otherwise; or more emphatically, "It was thus in the days of the blessed Constantine." How the days of the blessed Constantine were to be linked with the days of the Apostle Paul, or the practices of the Church of his age to be found in the Acts of the Church of that, was to him no perplexity at all. The Bible existed—that was divine; the Church existed—that also was divine. Therefore, they must agree. What we could not comprehend, we must be content to see darkly. At any attempt to push inquiry beyond this point, the Presbyter Matthew would become rather fiery, and the Widow Ursula very serious; and they would fall into a dialogue concerning the authority of antiquity, and the perils of youth, illustrated by examples from daring and misguided youths of their acquaintance, which commonly led them very far from the original subject.

I was therefore left to facts; and of these there were many to choose. Hospitals, funds for the redemption of captives, properties sacrificed for distribution among the needy, men and women of the noblest families devoting them-

selves to lowly works of Christian love—of such beneficent influences of our faith I saw many during those days; and it could not be without a thrill of joy that I wandered through the catacombs—through the passages where, in this very century, our brethren had met in peril of life—by tombs, where the bones of martyrs had been laid by those who followed them on the same hard but glorious path,—and issuing from the ranges of dark cells felt that the faith also had issued into the daylight, and was free to journey, with her message of love and redemption, throughout the world. The Presbyter Matthew was my guide on this expedition; and as we rested at the entrance, that family sepulchre of the children of God—that casket of so many of His jewels, seemed to unlock his stores of memory; and in answer to an observation of mine, that it must have been a glorious thing to see the whole Church come forth, as it were, from the catacombs at the accession of Constantine, he said—"I think there will be no day like it until the great resurrection. To see Christians start up in every corner, where they had lain hidden from prudence or fear; to find the palace full of them; to see the signs of brotherhood where one had least suspected them; to find oneself suddenly transformed from the member of a proscribed sect to a brother in a family large as the universe; to come suddenly, like a beggar from the darkness and cold, into the illu-

minated hall of a palace, and find it full, not of compassionate strangers, but of one's own kindred—to be welcomed there, not with cold alms, but with smiles, and songs, and embraces!"

"You describe something that seems, indeed, like heaven," I rejoined; "but how these timid and prudent Christians must have regretted they had not confessed their Lord when confession was difficult—that they had not endured the fragment of the cross which remained, when the crown was so near!"

"It may be so," said the old man; "but if regrets are to be admitted at one door into heaven, peace will surely escape at the other. It was, however, as you say, indeed glorious for the confessors. The meanest of those who had suffered or confessed in the persecution under Maximin, became suddenly greater than any hero. And then to see the bands of martyrs returning from the mines, maimed in that last glorious fight! Young men, with steps made feeble and slow by torture and hard usage; venerable old men blinded or lamed for the sake of Christ,—to see them led along the imperial roads from all quarters of the empire, like conquerors, singing the ancient hymns to that glorious Name for which they had suffered! They had gone out, driven with threats and blows, the despised servants of a crucified Lord. But into their prisons—into the depths of the unwholesome mines — where they toiled by the

wayside in chains—the tidings came, 'The Emperor is a Christian, and the Lord is King!' and the prison doors flew open, their chains fell off—the chains of blindness and disease human hands had forged but could not break, became, like the blessed Cross itself, signs of glory and victory. As they passed, matrons and maidens crowded to kiss their tattered garments; from palaces the richest wine and fruits were brought out to them by the hands of noble ladies; the poorest huts had their loving offerings. Then the recognitions, the restorations of husband to wife, of sons to parents, of parents to children, the tears and cries of joy, the embraces, the joy of welcoming or meeting as they received back a father or a child—ah, my son! those were times to live in! Some hearts may have grown cold, and some may never yet have opened to the sunshine, but is it nothing to have it streaming freely around us? Is it nothing for feeble human nature never more to have to choose between the severing of the dearest earthly ties, and the breaking of that one surpassing bond to Him who died for us? Is it nothing to be able to sing His praises in every place; to see the blessed sign of His redeeming love everywhere? Is it nothing to have our Emperor commanding us by all his imperial authority to worship Christ, and not him or his horse? Is it nothing to see, as you have, the ruler of the world prostrate in penitence on the

threshold of the house of God,—or, as I have, taking his lowliest place among the fathers of the Church in council?"

"You speak of Constantine, at the Council of Nice?" I observed.

"Yes; I saw him young and noble as an angel, in robes which shone, to my eyes, like raiment scarcely made on earth, enter the Council, and take his lowly seat there, as a youth beside his father, among the fathers and elders of the Church. I know not that these times are as good as those," continued the old man, "but I know, I thank God I live when I do."

"Rather than in the days of apostles and martyrs?" I asked.

"My son, how know I that I might have been strong enough?"

"But, father," I suggested, "these bloody contests for higher places in the Church, this angry contending with the weapons of Satan for the truth of God,—the pomp of the clergy, the worldliness of the laity, the multitude of ceremonies, the desecration of sacraments!"

The Presbyter Matthew grew uneasy, and rose from his seat.

"It is not the first time there has been a strife among the disciples which should be greatest," he replied; "nor the first time that people have imagined seeing others' sins was holiness, and thanked God for it."

I felt the rebuke sting as rebukes only do

when they contain a little of the spice of truth, and I replied, rather maliciously—

"Father, I should like to know something of the Novatian schismatics,—if the same strife for high places exists among them."

The horror on the old man's face was too deep for words.

"Why not of the Machinees also?" he said, sarcastically; "and the Arians, and Sabellians, and Apollinarians, and Donatists, and Circumcelliones? Why not complete your experience of life by researches among the witches of Egypt and the idolaters of Persia?"

Nor could I at all pacify him that day. Nevertheless, I did afterwards venture a little among the Novatian schismatics, and certainly found some good men among them, though mostly, I confess, of a hard and narrow sort; inasmuch as they pride themselves on narrowing the doors of repentance, and excluding absolutely from communion all who have fallen into idolatry. Their prejudices were more intense, and their ecclesiastical antipathies vigorous in proportion to the smallness of the circle they permitted themselves to love. On this point, therefore, Ursula and the Presbyter Matthew were soon set at rest on my behalf. But a few days after our journey through the catacombs, Ursula said to me—"We have been consulting about thee, the Presbyter Matthew and I, and we think it would benefit thee to converse with some of the

more learned fathers and teachers of the Church. There is Jerome, who, during his sojourn in Rome, persuaded so many noble matrons and virgins to leave the world and devote themselves to God. He is in Palestine, and they say his little community at Bethlehem is like a heaven on earth. There is the Presbyter John at Antioch, whom they call Chrysostom; travellers from the East cannot say enough of his holiness and eloquence. And there is Augustine, the friend and presbyter of Bishop Valerius, at Hippo, in Africa,—a man of remarkable genius, and in his faith, they say, simple as a child, and accessible. He has also passed through many tempests of doubt, and may, we think, be able to aid and counsel thee better than we, who have always kept, like timid sailors, pretty close to the shore. Wilt thou go and see either of these?" I said—"I will go and live near one of these, and serve under them in any lowly office they may assign me. But no lesson their lips can teach me can be richer than what your life has taught me. I have learned from you, that if I would learn I must serve. I will be no more a drift-weed on the ocean of the world. I will choose some quiet place in it to live and work in, and as I live so I shall surely learn."

And when I took leave of them, it was as from a second home; she gave me a copy of the Gospel of John, to replace the one I had given away, and the Presbyter Matthew gave me the Life of

the Monk Anthony, by Athanasius of Alexandria, and an old man's blessing. Ursula also promised, if opportunity offered, to remember Marcella. It was not for me to see her again; and to be away from Rome was, I felt, easier than to be there and not see her. At times mother, this avoiding her seemed to me an unchristian pride, and I even went to the palace of Olybrius to bid them farewell. But I turned away before I reached the door; and as I walked from the house in my new but lowly dress, she passed in a chariot, attended by two or three slaves, and did not recognise me. I said my farewell to her in silence, and it became a prayer.

Where, then, is this kingdom of Christ they told us was established in the world? I see a world bearing His name, indeed, and contending about His faith,—honouring His sign, but transgressing His laws. This multitude I see divided into two classes—clergy and laity: the laity leaving the service of God to the clergy, the clergy mistaking the service of an external system for the service of God. And amongst all these I see, or rather feel—for no visible mark is upon them—a few monks, priests, soldiers, women, patiently serving those around them, lifting up their hearts to God, living at once for man and God. I see no daylight of Christian truth and love, mother; but through the night I see many lights shining, lighting up homes, gleaming afar from deserts, beaming by the way-

side on the weary, and from the rocks on the tempest-tossed. The Day has not yet come. The Day will be something far different from this. Our Divine Redeemer is indeed ruling in the visible heavens, lighting up the firmament with sun, and moon, and stars—His path is on the sea, His hand curbing its waves, and guiding its tempests,—the impress of His hand is everywhere, from the snowy peak to the lowliest flower—His kingdom is indeed in many hearts; but when visibly He shall reign over distracted, fallen, struggling humanity, it will be better than this. There must yet be another era to come—a better resurrection than that of the Church under Constantine. And as I look on this proud clergy, with their endless strife about words, which to them are indeed empty, and the sharper strife about pomps, which to them seem real,—and this untaught laity calling itself Catholic, mistaking the passion for the Church for the consecration of the heart to God, and the waters of a deferred baptism for the regeneration of the soul,—I sometimes ask myself whether the persecutions are indeed over—whether some scriptural truth a little too clearly seen and openly stated, may not yet be a sentence of death, and whether some future Stephen may not be welcomed hence from the martyr's death-pangs by the Son of God for worshipping after the way they call heresy the God of our fathers.

Who is this Vigilantius, who uttered to me

such words of faith, yet spoke of his own name as everywhere proscribed? He may, indeed, be less holy than some of those who uphold the very falsehoods he denounced; they may look up to the Saviour more steadfastly through the veil of their errors than he without them. Yet I am sure, if there is one Church History which may be condensed into one sentence—"As they went by the way, there was a dispute among them who should be greatest,"—there must be another Church History written in heaven, containing very different events and names; for is there not the Book of Life, and will not many a proscribed here be found emblazoned there?

LETTER IV.

VERY refreshing it was to me, after my sojourn in cities, again to find myself wandering by the side of fountains and rivers, among valleys and hills, to watch the fish leaping in the shady stream, to see the fisher's nets spread on the rocks, to hear from afar borne on the fresh sea-breeze the chant of the sailors, to gaze on the blue sea, or, when clouds shaded the sky, to watch the flitting lights chasing each other, flashing their emerald radiance on the waves, and lighting up one white sail after another like snowy sea-birds on the dark horizon. Almost my heart was tempted to the superstition of the hermit—that God is most where man is least. Yet I know the changing glories of Nature are but as the flutter of the folds of His robe, whilst the feeblest human heart that looks to Him may meet the full gaze of His eye fixed on it in return, and the watchful steps of the angels pass by mountain and ocean, and all the green beauty of earth, and all the gorgeous glories of heaven, to listen where one sinner bends himself in the far country, or one forgiven son carries on the daily warfare with sin. Only to my dim eyes

are this earth, the Church and the world, an enigma; the angels stooping from the battlements of the City of God across this wilderness, see the heirs of salvation threading its mazes, and fighting their way beneath its strongholds.

What do all my perplexities amount to but this? We belong to a fallen race; we pass through a world where the enemy has gained, not barely an entrance, but a kingdom. The world is not a Paradise, but a wilderness; the Church on earth is not a City of God, but a ship tossed by many tempests, and the holiest amongst us are not just men made perfect, but wayward children, here schooled and bred, and trained for a home which is to be.

One of my halting-places was at Nola, in the south of Italy. I arrived there late one evening, and finding the door of a magnificent church open, ventured to seek shelter within. Lamps were burning in it, and it was fragrant with incense. Soon the polished marble columns and glittering ornaments floated dreamily before my eyes, and I fell asleep and dreamed myself in a palace. When I awoke, a venerable-looking man was kneeling before the altar. Pictures were freshly painted on the walls, interspersed with tablets of marble; and my first impression was that I was in a heathen temple, but recently converted into a church. Paintings of shipwrecks, with the form, as I thought, of one of the ancient gods appearing in the clouds,—of

dead men rising from their graves,—of wild animals bowing their necks meekly to the yoke at the command of the same celestial figure,—I certainly wondered that such remains of heathenism should have been spared; but my wonder gave place to a strange bewilderment when I saw mingled with these representations of stories unknown to me, delineations of the miracles of our Lord, and incidents in His life on earth. My astonishment was at its climax when the venerable stranger left his station on the altar steps, and approached me with a courteous greeting—

"A pilgrim, doubtless, to the tomb of the holy Felix."

His words were a riddle to me, and I replied in words which to me had lost none of their force, though I had, indeed, sadly learnt how little they availed without the addition of some more modern epithet—"A Christian traveller, who found a night's shelter within these walls." I then ventured to ask why this strange mixture of Pagan and Christian objects which had so perplexed me. The stranger's first expression was of displeasure; but this quickly gave place to a smile at my simplicity. "I am Paulinus," he replied, "who have built this sacred edifice as some faint token of the devotion of an unworthy heart to the blessed Felix, whose aid has delivered me in many calamities—whose intercession has rescued me in many temptations."

Half doubting whether the old man were a Pagan or a Christian, or the founder of a new religion of his own, I said—"But who was Felix?"

"In what region of the earth can my friend have dwelt, that the fame of the holy martyr has not penetrated its obscurity?" he replied. And thereon he commenced to me a recital of self-sacrifices, unnatural virtues, and supernatural powers, visions, miracles, and apparitions, which did not diminish my perplexities in the least,—one thing only being clear, that the holy Felix's good deeds after his death far exceeded those accomplished in his lifetime.

I could not help thinking Paulinus might have saved himself the trouble of having new pictures painted in honour of his patron. The representations of the old heathen legends might surely have been gathered from the deserted temples, quite adapted for his purpose. I gazed into the stranger's earnest and venerable countenance as he spoke of our Lord and this martyr, in terms which could scarcely have startled me more had Apollo or Mercury taken the place of Felix. It seemed to me a mere baptized, — certainly not regenerated heathenism, with this one advantage over the extinct superstition:—the objects of adoration were purer; the fables, if more childish, were less revolting; the light of the sun they eclipsed was still reflected upon these idols and their mythology.

Paulinus told me somewhat of his history:—how the death of an only son, in the prime and promise of his life, had driven him and his beloved wife to seek consolation—ah, mother! not in Christ, but in "penitential exercises;" how they had abandoned their lands in Aquitaine, and settled here in the south of Italy, to be near —not Him who is helped in His poor, or who speaks through His ministers, but "the bones of the blessed Felix,"—very blessed, I thought, in this, that he was at rest, and knew not of this idolatry. "Is it possible," I mused, as I watched his kind and serious face, and listened to the earnest and touching tones of his voice, "that through thee, and such as thee, the light of heaven is being excluded from struggling, tempest-tossed souls, and for the bread of heaven these stones are being dealt out to the famishing world?" My heart was so heavy, I could scarcely find words. He brought me to his residence, and triumphantly pointed out to me how his elegant villa and garden had been turned into cells for a celibate community, with kitchen-garden to appease their hunger and occupy their hands. In the evening, the whole community meet around a frugal board, and it relieved me to hear the name of God honoured as the Giver of all good things, instead of that of Felix. After this evening meal, the community remained together an hour; and to give the conversation an edifying turn, Paulinus began by

relating an anecdote from the life of Martin of Tours;—how Christ had appeared to him at night, clothed in the mantle he had bestowed on a beggar the day before. This fable, beautiful indeed, as a parable, was the first in an ascending scale of marvellous narratives from the lives of Anthony of Egypt, Martin, Felix, and many other martyrs and monks, who would probably have been as bewildered as I was, could they have listened to their own exploits. Some of these had beautiful typical meanings: there were subduings of brute and inanimate nature, and conquests over devils in the name of Christ, which, certainly in forms as marvellous, though with marvels deeper than those which make children stare, every Christian must know. Much indeed of those legends seemed a mere translation of the Christian warfare and victory into vulgar and visible pictures. But there were also other tales, as destitute of spiritual import as the wildest nursery tales of the barbarians around our mountain home; and as the dusk came on, the symbolical gradually gave place to this merely monstrous and marvellous, until a hush of terror crept over the party. Then, in the silence, I ventured on my contribution, repeating this history:—

"And straightway He constrained His disples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side of Bethsaida, while He sent away the people.

"And when He had sent them away, He departed unto a mountain to pray.

"And when the even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land.

"And He saw them toiling in rowing: (for the wind was contrary unto them;) and about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

"But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

"(For they saw Him, and were troubled;) and immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

"And Peter answered Him, and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee on the water.

"And He said, Come; and when Peter was come down, out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus; but when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me!

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

"And when they were come unto the ship, the wind ceased; then they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God."

A reverent silence came over the little community as I spoke; then the whisper spread—

"It is from the Holy Scriptures."

And all arose and stood with heads meekly bent. I saw tears flow down more than one face; and at the close, as we parted for the night, one of the older men came up to me and said—"Ah, no words are like those words, my son; bind them about thy heart."

"I think," I replied, in a voice loud enough for many to hear, for I felt much, "if we bound them more closely round our hearts, there would be no room for the tempter to insert the falsehoods, that we need any intercessor to incline the heart of Jesus to our prayers, or that we should seek aid of doubting, trembling, sinking saints, to make the 'immediately' of that gracious Saviour more immediate."

My words met with not a few frowns, and a few doubtful smiles, but they had no effect on the festivities of the morrow—the day of the Feast of St. Felix. The poor crowded from all the neighbouring villages to the festival, very literally a feast to them, inasmuch as tables laden with all kinds of viands were spread in front of the churches, where they might eat and drink in honour of St. Felix,—a species of adoration in which they indulged until Paulinus himself was scandalised; but his friends consoled him with the reflection that the ignorant rustics must be won to Christ by soft means,

and the lip of the medicine-cup must be sugared.

Ah, mother, I have more of the natural zeal of outraged common sense than of the wise and lowly boldness of a confessor, for I could not restrain myself from asking "whether it was not poison rather than medicine they were rendering thus alluring—whether they were, indeed, drawing the ignorant people to Christ, or seducing them from Him?" And thus myself uttering an irritating protest, where perchance I might have introduced a saving truth, I closed the door effectually against whatever I might have said.

And yet, could I have said less, when I left hundreds of wretched, misguided peasants, singing or quarrelling, in various stages of intoxication, and imagining that this festival was in honour of God, or one beloved by Him? The words might be harsh; but they were but spoken tears. After that they watched me narrowly, and would not suffer me to hold uninterrupted converse. Silent I could not remain another night in that desecrated place; and, downcast and sick at heart, I sought my next night's shelter in the most solitary place I could find. I thought of Vigilantius and his words—"They think to honour them with their paltry candles, on whom the Lamb shineth in all the brightness of His majesty." I thought of that blessed rest with Him, where Peter, and thou-

sands of other sanctified spirits, who had sunk but for his outstretched hand—who had apostatised but for His prevailing intercession, praise Him who redeemed them with His blood for ever and ever, until the calm of that region of peace, and that voice of tender compassion, hushed my troubled soul. Not, as on the previous night, in the marble temple of a man, but under the starry firmament of God, beneath that invisible heaven of heavens beyond, where He is the Sun, and the Just shine as stars, I lay down in peace and slept; and through storms of all kinds,—through mountain thunder storms —through the inward tempest of repressed feelings which I had thought lulled, save that they thus recurred — through tempests of frantic mobs, crying, "He is a King," and "Crucify," with the same wild passion,—those divine, yet most human words, "It is I; be not afraid."

On the morrow, as I was pursuing my road towards Sicily, whence I intended to proceed either to Africa or to Palestine, a young man joined me, and with a courteous salutation offered to walk on with me. His dress was plain, and had something of a monkish or clerical cut; but his manners were refined, and we soon skimmed over the ordinary coasting topics, and found ourselves launched in deep water. He related to me many noble acts performed by Paulinus of Nola—how he had sacrificed all the princely state of his life in Gaul, to become an humble

member of his beloved community at Nola, and only retained his estates that he might himself distribute their revenues among the poor.

"But the religion he is spreading is no Christianity," I said; "it is idolatry celebrated with drunken riots."

"Strong language," was the reply. "Yet I confess many of these martyr-feasts deserves no better terms. Augustine of Hippo has denounced them with all the noble severity of his eloquence."

"Do you know Augustine?" I asked.

"I am one of the happy members of his little brotherhood, near Hippo," he said, "where he presides over the devotions and labours of many whom, like me, he has rescued from destruction. I owe to him all the misery I have escaped—all the freedom I possess—all the bliss I hope for—to him as the servant of Christ."

He told me then, as he had heard it for himself, of the marvellous grace of God shown in Augustine's conversion,—of his early, transient thoughtfulness,—of his mother's prayers so long apparently unheard—of his long captivity to sin and unbelief, one perpetually reproducing the other,—of his bitter waking, and long struggles to rise, like one tossing helplessly in a dream,—of the divine words, "Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ," which at length broke those chains (which were but his divided will), and united and reknit his whole being, no more in

the dull lethargy of sleep, but in the blessed energy of conscious life—the life in God. "He attributes all he has to the free and wonderful grace of God," he continued; "so that the higher he rises in holiness, the more deeply he is rooted in self-renouncing gratitude, and all his rarest virtues grow on him without effort, but with a natural grace, as plants in climates near the sun —not works of struggling flesh, but fruits of the free Spirit—the only struggle being to abide in God."

"Doubtless then," said I, "he rises above all the superstitions of this confused age; he receives and enjoys freely every creature of God; and the fetters of these laborious ceremonies and monastic exercises are to him as nothing."

"Nay, not as nothing," was the reply; "they are to him the wholesome exercises of a soul in abundant health. The cares of secular life, and the pleasures of sense, are to us the only fetters we dread; and we fly from them to the sacred freedom of the celibate life, and the spiritual festivals of the holy fasts, and the blessed exercises of praise and prayer, and diligent labour among the poor and for them. But you must come with me Hippo and see.

LETTER V.

I WOULD, dear mother, you could be with me here to see how Christianity can raise a nation, and bring the remotest tribes of the earth into a vital union with the centres of civilization and empire. The language of the educated here, indeed, and of the cities and churches, is Latin; and Latin civilization and Latin literature are as much at home here as in Rome; yet, climate and intermixture with the native races give a peculiar character to the people. There is a tropical fervour about them—a wild abandonment in their pleasures—a fierce intensity in their austerities—a passionate ardour in their faith. Scarcely one of the hundreds of cities which crown the heights or gird the bays of this luxuriant shore, but has its church, its bishop, its presbyters, and its Christian schools. Many glory in being the cemeteries of martyrs; and the names of Perpetua and Felicitas, the matron and the slave, are affectionately honoured here, with many other sufferers and confessors in that cruel persecution which, under Caracalla, swept and sifted the churches of Africa. Yet I could

deem, at times, those martyrs happiest whose names have perished, or are written only in a book not yet opened to man; so that they can never turn their brethren's hearts away from their Lord and ours.

In the fishing villages, and amongst the inland domains, rises many an humble church, built by some devout proprietor, and served by the humble pastor, who labours with his hands for his own support, and at the same time ministers to the spiritual wants of his people.

There have been also convulsions within the African Church, as well as storms around it, and these have left rude traces in the hearts of the flocks, and also in some cases on the walls of the churches. A division about the election of a bishop rent the Church into a schism, which still remains, and the wildest section of the seceders, called Circumcelliones, have in many places plundered and battered down the churches of the Catholics. Here, also, there are the traces of that marvelous disturbing power which everywhere labours with such terrific skill to undermine or to parody the work of God. On the whole, however, the people seem to me less occupied with strifes about words,—the quality of their minds seems more practical and less subtle than in the more ancient seats of civilization; and though the fallen heart has shattered the churches with some schisms, the fallen intellect seems to have distracted them into fewer

heresies. Among the more thoughtful, indeed, and those under the immediate influence of Augustine, deep questions are debated; but they concern rather the relations of man to God, than those inmost mysteries in the essence of the Godhead, which form the subjects of spiritual and carnal warfare in the East. Yet here, indeed, I must confess, as with those Oriental disputes, the temper of the combatants appears to become warmer in proportion as the subject of debate becomes colder—more removed from all practical influence on the heart and life. It is Augustine who in this, as in everything else, gives the tone to these churches.

When we arrived at Hippo, we found the city hung with tapestry; banners, and triumphal arches festooned the streets. The funeral obsequies of the good old Bishop Valerius were over, and the inhabitants of Hippo were rejoicing in their new bishop Augustine.

How can I describe him to thee? The influence of a man like him is made up of so many nameless graces and gifts, of so much incommunicable attraction; his character and his genius so react on each other,—his words are so blended with his deeds,—the power of his unaffected holiness so consecrates and inspires his conversation, that it is impossible to read or remember his sayings as those of another man; a melody flows through them; tones and glances, smiles and earnest looks, stern or tender emphasis

come back with them; and when we try to convey them to others, we are indignant with our own feebleness of representation, or their poverty of perception,—the life is gone from the words; what we communicate is not even a picture, it is a skeleton; it is not only lifeless, it is a corpse of what was alive. I might tell thee a few isolated acts:—how he not only gave up his own property to the poor, but resigns his episcopal revenues to be administered and distributed by his clergy; but what would this express to thee unless thou couldst see the grace and cheerfulness which shew his lowliness to be his joy? I might tell thee how he restored the property of a man who, being long childless, had bestowed his estates on the Church,—on his having a son; and how he refuses all donations to ecclesiastical purposes from those who have nearer domestic claims. I might tell thee of his fastings and hymns, his vigils and prayers, his journeys and labours, and counsellings; but little would this avail, unless thou couldst hearken to the wise and rapid words which cut through the knots of so many difficulties, or listen to the counsels and rebukes tender or stern as a father's, or see the patient attention with which he attends to long statements of wrong or perplexity, unravelling the most difficult cases as he listens, and at the end presenting you with the solution as if by inspiration,—unless you could see the tears of pity in his eyes, or the glow of pleasure

in his face, when some applicant is sent away relieved or satisfied.

I can only recall some of his sayings and writings for thee, and leave thy Christian heart to form a picture of the man.

"Whom could I find to reconcile me to Thee? Was I to have recourse to angels?—by what prayers?—by what sacraments? . . . But the true Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, appeared between mortal sinners and the immortal Just One,—mortal with men, just with God; that because the wages of righteousness is life and peace, He might, by a righteousness conjoined with God, make void that death of sinners, now made righteous, which He willed to have in common with them. Hence He was shewn forth to holy men of old, that so they, through faith in His passion to come, as we, through faith of it passed, might be saved.

"How hast Thou loved us, good Father, who sparedst not Thine only Son, but deliveredst Him up for us ungodly! How hast Thou loved us, for whom He that thought it no robbery to be equal with Thee was made subject even to the death of the cross,—He alone from among the dead having power to lay down His life, and power to take it again; for us to Thee both Victor and Victim, and therefore Victor because the Victim; for us to Thee Priest and Sacrifice, and therefore Priest because the Sacrifice; making

us to Thee, of servants, sons, by being born of Thee and serving Thee! Well, then, is my hope strong in Him, that Thou wilt heal all my infirmities, by Him who sitteth at Thy right hand and maketh intercession for us; else should I despair, for many and great are my infirmities; but Thy medicine is mightier; and see, Lord, I cast my care on Thee, that I may live to consider wondrous things out of Thy law. Thou knowest my unskilfulness and my infirmities—teach me and heal me. He Thine only Son, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, hath redeemed me with His blood."

Yet it is such men who, throwing the whole weight of their genius and life into this system of the day, rivet its abuses on the minds of men What danger can there be in the doctrines which Augustine holds? What exaggeration can there be in practices which Augustine promotes? Thus having enclosed himself in this external system, with all the power of life he derived, not from it, but from the Source of all life,—he, indeed, lives by that higher life, but the fruits of that life are attributed to the system he has embraced. Thus this fatal formalism feeds itself with the fruits of the very life it is crushing. For, more perilous than the worship of relics, more subtle than the adoration of the shells of truth which controversy has robbed of its kernel, more universal than the idolatry of saints, I see another Shape rising in misty

grandeur out of the earth, with virgin grace, and a matronly majesty, clothing itself with the rainbows of heaven,—the Virgin Spouse of Christ, the immaculate Mother of saints, the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. It is she who, with her magic touch, awakens the soul to new life; it is she who, by her priestly ministrations and her elaborate penances, keeps pure the robes of saints; it is she who, by that hand which reaches from earth to heaven, unlocks the gates of Paradise. She is the mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, with her right foot on the sea and her left on the earth. It is she who is the holy city, clothed with the glory of God. It is she before whom kings bow, and whom the nations must own. It is she who usurps every office of the Godhead,—bestowing life, instead of the Father; redeeming, by her perpetual sacrifices, instead of the Son; sanctifying, by her ordinances, instead of the Holy Ghost. Scarcely an attribute of the Deity or a title of the Saviour, but may be or has been applied to her. The Way, the Truth, and the Life,—the Priest, Lawgiver, and Judge. She is adored with the disinterested devotion of loyalty, with the fervent zeal of patriotism, with the passionate fervour of love. But leaving this figure; gazing into this mist, what do we perceive?—a priest in one place bestowing divine life by means of a little water; a priest in another bestowing Christ Himself in

a little bread and wine, a priest in another bestowing heaven by a little anointing, and in a few words of prayer. Faith may indeed often penetrate the symbol, and through the water, and the bread, and the anointing oil, stretch forth her hand to Christ,—His hand being so readily outstretched to save; but what will this system be when completed, or what is it now to many, but a laborious toiling blindfold in a circle which they are told leads to heaven—and when their eyes are opened by death (the wand that breaks all enchantments) they find themselves wearied and placed where they began? What will it be but a practical polytheism for the million, and a practical pantheism, with sacramental organs, for the few? It is painful to see dust, and ashes, and pictures, and images honoured as they are; but these are the idols of the lowest. This goddess attracts the homage of the noblest in heart and soul. In the name of Christ, she betrays Christianity; in the name of Christ, I see no reason why she should not—I see a thousand reasons why she must—one day persecute and destroy His most faithful disciples. As He was, so are we; as He is, so shall we be. When shall the mirage be exchanged for the living fountains of water? When shall the Son of God himself appear, and the true Holy City descend out of heaven from God, and all lies be compelled to reveal themselves as they are, and to shrink into the darkness whence they sprang?

This controversy of Bishop Augustine's with the heretic Pelagius, from the remote islands of the west, seems likely to deepen and extend. Or rather, I suppose, it is merely another form of the most ancient of all controversies,—how responsibility can be united with absolute dependence on God, or how evil can exist in a world where the Holy One is alone eternal and supreme? The question extends from the depths of God's eternal purposes to the depths of man's fallen nature, yet touches the minutest practical questions of every-day life. To me it seems but as the echo of the perpetual plashes of the surges of human thought against the one insoluble enigma—Whence came Evil? Some only reach the first breakers, some penetrate further, but all at last dash against that rock. My mind can only bow with St. Paul's, and say, "Oh the depth of the wisdom of God—how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" My heart can only hide itself from that abyss of darkness in that other infinite abyss of light,—the height and depth, and length and breadth of the love which passeth knowledge!

With many, I fear, it is an idle theorising about their capability of rising from a prostration from which they never attempt to rise. If any assert to me their inherent power to love God, I can only say—"Then love Him!" if any moan hopelessly—"I cannot pray, I cannot believe, I cannot lift up my eyes to God," I would say, "Try."

When once the eyes are lifted up, I have no fear but that the cure will be effected, and the glory given to Him to whom it is due.

This only personally I know—I was wandering from Him when He sought me, and brought me back to God. By myself I can do nothing; yet unless I strive, as well as pray, I do not overcome.

Yet I cannot but rejoice in the full and adoring recognition of the grace of God by Augustine; seeing, as I do, how many will receive from him truths which appear to me stated much more sublimely and simply by the Apostles. I cannot help thinking that if, indeed, as seems too probable, a deluge is about to sweep over the whole Church, God in His mercy is preparing this ark, in which many may take refuge; and finding Christ there, find in Him safety and life.

LETTER VI.

THE Holy Land! I have left those regions of the earth consecrated by the universal presence of the Creator, and now my feet stand where the feet of my Divine Redeemer stood, my eyes rest on the hills and valleys on which His human eyes rested—the flowers and grain around me have sprung in lineal succession from those which suggested His parables.

Wouldst thou believe it! They have thought to consecrate further the living turf He trod, by crushing it beneath cold marble; they have deemed it honouring the sepulchre, where they say He lay, and from whence He rose, by blocking it up in dead stonework from the light and air of heaven! Happily they cannot mar the mountains or the seashore where the Apostles spread their nets, or petrify the waves which heave and ripple on the beach with the same fresh music as when His voice rose above them to teach, or His feet trod their heaving sapphire. They cannot desecrate the only monument He has recognised—the only image He has sanctioned—the Book of God. It is the land itself

which it is such a joy to me to see and tread,—the land God consecrated to Himself,—the land in which the Son of God dwelt,—the land for which there are surely yet such glorious destinies. After Jerusalem, my steps were first directed to Bethlehem. It was dusk when I reached the valley beneath it; but all around me glittered hundreds of scattered lamps, and from all directions streamed sounds of sacred melody, echoed from crag to crag, not by lifeless rocks, but by living human voices praising God. The sacred music met and blended in delicious harmonies,—now a burst of sweet female voices came in chorus from among a group of palms in the valley, then the rich tenor of some solitary rang from an isolated rock. Chorus answered chorus, and now and then, from some neighbouring caves, voice after voice took up the verses of a psalm. Finally, the 141st Psalm, the Vesper Psalm, was chanted in chorus by the whole community together, pealing at once from valley, slope, and crag,—sweet voices of young maidens soaring in jets of song through the deep harmonies,—and here and there deep rich tones penetrating the chorus with their individual force; whilst through and round all rolled the river of praise like the sound of many waters. This torrent of human song ceased, and the most absolute silence succeeded. It was as if the ocean had been suddenly ice-bound:—all its waves reined in as they broke, its ripples poised as they

bent to kiss the shore; the whole heaving, stirring thundering, plashing mass of living waters spell-bound into the dead silence of a glacier. I never knew what silence was before. Not a foot-fall, not a murmur, not a breath broke the stillness—it seemed as if the next sound must be something like that still small voice which made Elijah shroud his head with his mantle; or that great voice, as of a trumpet, which John heard behind him, saying—"I am Alpha and Omega—the first and the last."

No voice came. Only a faint breeze crept slowly along the valley, and stirred the vine-leaves above my head, and bathed my forehead. But God was there, and the whole world, the green earth, and the heavens, seemed to expand visibly before me with the fulness of His presence. I could not stir from that spot, the place seemed so sacred; and wrapping my travelling cloak around me, I lay down and slept. Early the next morning I was awakened by a matin hymn from the same invisible choir. "Early will I seek Thee!" rose sweetly on the dawn, blended with the name of Christ. But to this a very different scene followed; the hills and valleys around me were soon stirring with busy labourers, silent and diligent; active figures were moving among vines or corn-fields, binding faggots in the luxuriant groves, or gathering fruits and herbs, or drawing water for the morning meal. From time to time snatches of sacred

song burst spontaneously from happy voices; and if one could forget the outer circle of darkness and sin, which needed all the labour of every Christian life to irradiate its gloom and penetrate its misery, the place would have seemed like a Paradise. For a time, I did forget it utterly, and sat feasting on the delicious vision.

My enchantment was first broken by the approach of a man with furrowed cheeks and meagre form, and sordid, that is, dirty and ragged, dress. His powerful brow was wrinkled with deeper traces than thought can plough, and the penetrating eyes beneath gleamed with a fire apparently more used for detecting sins than veiling them. There was less of sunshine there than of fire. He took in my appearance and dress at a glance. It was plain, but certainly could not glory in the sanctity of dirt.

"A traveller for pleasure, I presume?" was the first salutation.

"I trust my steps may be guided by higher aims," I said.

"Whence?" was the next laconic interrogation.

"Originally from the mountains beyond Italy."

"Gaul?"

"More to the east."

"Perchance thou art acquainted with Vigilantius?"

"I have met him."

"Thou hast listened, then, to his barbarous

or canine eloquence? Thou hast heard the roar of the Nemean lion?"

"I met him once," I replied; "he seemed to love the truth."

"Doubtless, as wild beasts their prey; but the disciple of Vigilantius will scarcely be at home in the humble refuge of Jerome."

I fixed my eyes with more respect on the shaggy figure on hearing that name, associated with so much labour for the most sacred cause, and said—

"I am no disciple of Vigilantius. I never met him but once, and then I liked him. I trust I am a disciple of Jerome's Master."

This seemed to pacify him, but he was certainly in no conciliatory mood, and he recommenced—

"Whither did your steps lead you from your deserts?"

"To Rome."

"Very likely to improve your morals and faith! Thank Heaven, I rescued many from that Babylon. Whither thence?"

"To Paulinus of Nola."

"A man who is always trying his wings for flight, and never able to fly. He has endeavoured to accomplish the difficult task of getting through the eye of a needle in the stature of a camel; of expending his revenues to feed the poor, and keeping his estates for himself, imagining that delighting his eyes with the magnificence

of marble temples and golden decorations is renouncing the lust of the eye and the pride of life; wearing a beggar's garment, but keeping his wardrobes full, that he may have the satisfaction of feeling he might at any time dress as a prince if he chose. Nevertheless, Paulinus is a good man, and a good Catholic; and one should always remember his spirit has been earthbound by the fetters of marriage. Art thou come hither, young man, to be the bridegroom of celibacy, of holy chastity and poverty?"

I replied that I was under no vows, but had intended to devote myself to the service of God, in whatever humble capacity might suit me, in the neighbourhood of the Presbyter John Chrysostom, at Antioch.

"Beware he do not seduce thee into Origenism, or any other of his flagitious errors; not but that John of Antioch has his good points."

I began to hope the temper of the venerable monk was softening, and ventured to tell him of the effect the chants of the previous evening and the scene of this morning had produced on me, knowing the delight he had himself expressed in this community of his own forming. But something must have strangely crossed him that morning, for his eyes positively flashed, his voice became deep as distant thunder as he replied—

"It were better to live with vild beasts than with such Christians as are many of these envious frantic monks!"

A feeling of reverence for Jerome himself prevented my prolonging the interview. I had been told something of his early life, of his early bitter struggles with his intense and passionate nature, confounding its pure affections with its basest lusts, and spending weary years in endeavouring to crush into silence strings which, rightly touched, might have been tuned into songs of thanksgiving. What wonder that the instrument thus roughly handled should ever after give out harsh and grating notes, and that the wildness of its discords should be the only measure left of what might have been the richness of its harmonies! I knew that he had fled from himself to the desert, choosing with a desperate and mad valour to wrestle with the foe on his own ground. Deeper and deeper he had plunged into the solitudes; no solitude seemed solitary enough, no wilderness wild enough for that fierce combat. Eloquent, sensitive, fervent, he had spent six years in that mortal struggle,—fasting until he fell on the ground from weakness, keeping vigils until he dropped into the feverish sleep of exhaustion, and had wild visions as he slept,—conscious that sin was rooted in his inmost heart, and endeavouring to tear it thence; and when, worn, and bruised, and aged, he came out of the conflict, it was to find that the enemy, unweakened, had only shifted his ground. Forbidding his heart to love, he did not forbid it to hate; his bitter experience

of himself gave him a keen and bitter sense of the sins of others. To his intense character, half the world seemed hypocrites, and the other half cowards. Yet in spite of his perpetual disputes, and his hatreds, and the wear and tear of his voluntary tortures, Jerome has perhaps done more for the sacred cause than any man among his contemporaries. His influence among many of the religious ladies of Rome is such, that nunneries of noble women have sprung up among the solitudes of Bethlehem. He is translating the Bible from the original languages into Latin; and whilst diligently availing himself of every translation he can find, he relies on none, but accurately collates every procurable manuscript, and patiently draws from Jews, by slow process of comparison, the precise meaning of every Hebrew word, braving the reproaches of the ignorant and envious. Whilst accomplishing this, he volunteers on countless skirmishes, carries on religious correspondences with numerous pious ladies, manages I know not how many nunneries and monasteries in his own neighbourhood, fights with bishops at home, and heretics at home and abroad, and on the resolution of the noble Demetrias to break off her betrothal and continue *non nupta*, is sufficiently disengaged to indite for her a congratulatory letter elaborate and laudatory enough to turn the heads of all the aspiring young ladies in Constantinople and Rome.

Since that first interview I have several times seen Jerome, under varied circumstances, and I have grown to love the fervent, contradictory, laborious, crotchety, accurate, intense man, as we do a tree which shelters our gardens, gnarled and twisted by struggles with many tempests, all the more for its knots and deformities,—or a veteran for his scars and deficient limbs. If he had allowed himself to love as he has allowed himself to hate, if he had schooled himself to forbear as he has to suffer, if he had contended against sin as he has against innocent feelings, if he had given himself to the nurture of the new heavenly life as he has to the uprooting of the old earthly nature, if he had been less of a cynic and more of a Christian,—what a man he might have been!

LETTER VII.

MANY weeks have passed since I have been able to address a line to thee, my mother: days of sickness and danger, in which I have often longed for thy voice by my bedside, instead of the strange voices which surrounded me, yet days whose lessons I would not have been without. And now I can look back on all these dangers and sufferings as past, and I may speak freely of them to thee, without alarming thee, that thou mayest praise God with me, whose mercy has brought me through.

During my sojourn at Bethlehem, the forsaken cell of an anchorite was assigned to me,—one of those solitary habitations which honeycomb the hills around the cœnobia or communities of solitaries. Here I had a rough mattress, an earthen pitcher, and two shelves cut in the rock, to serve as my storeroom and library. What could a monk desire beside? The rains, however, had lately fallen; the walls and floor of my dwelling were still moist; and on the night I established myself there, I awoke feeling the blood flow

through every vein in my body, my face burning, and every sound falling on my brain as if echoed through the ear of Dionysius. Drops of water falling one by one at the entrance of my cave, seemed like ghostly footsteps advancing in slow funeral procession; and I rolled from side to side, and compelled myself stoically to stillness. I could get no sleep. I felt no terror, but an extreme tension of my nerves, which prevented my putting two thoughts together. The wakening horn sounded from hill to hill, and in a few minutes the matin hymn echoed throughout the valley. The cheerful hum of labour reached me as I lay, and the sunbeams slowly lighted up the rocky ledges of my cave, but no one came near me, and I felt unable to move. Thus I remained until my pitcher of water was emptied, and then, unable longer to endure the thirst which came on, I crept out of my hole towards the nearest well. On my way I met two monks, who, seeing my wild and haggard looks, took compassion on me. One of them relieved me of the pitcher, and carried it towards the well, whilst the other led me back to my cave. The monk who had taken my pitcher soon returned with the physician of the community, who, looking very seriously at me, proceeded to bleed me. Having accomplished that to his own satisfaction, and reduced me to a state of weakness in which all things were alike indifferent to me, he gave some whispered or-

ders,--the broken words of which perplexed me all day,—and left me under the charge of the old monk Eunomius.

Eunomius passed the day in repeating psalms, administering cooling drinks to me, and transcribing manuscripts. The movement of his style irritated me to such an extent, that I could not get rid of the fancy some one was writing on my brain; but I was too languid to ask him to desist. About twilight, however, this work was laid aside; the dim lamp was lighted, and my companion threw its light on my face, and gave me a long, searching gaze.

I asked, "Did the physician say I was likely to die?"

The old man was evidently divided between his conscientious regard for truth and his duty as a nurse, and gave me one of those equivocal replies, with which some people, who imagine sickness is a kind of second childhood, believe invalids are pacified. I understood what he meant to conceal, and gave him my precious roll, with directions how to send it to you. Thereon, seeing me wakeful, and intending either to edify or to entertain me, he commenced relating to me anecdotes from the histories of various sick monks — victories over frightful devils—visions of angels—burials by wild beasts, and similar incidents. These, recalling the wild stories I had heard from Paulinus of Nola, and legends in the life of Antony,—and mingling

with the loud sighing and sudden hushes,—the wailings and whisperings of the winds around my strange abode, and the second access of the fever, as the night drew on, filled my brain with the wildest delirious visions, which yet were scarcely wilder than the realities which suggested them. I seemed to reach solitary huts in the desert, whence at night came fearful cries, as of human voices, mingling with the roar of wild beasts; and when I entered, I found they were the voices of devils. I wandered from one rugged wilderness to another; in one, a hairy creature with claws would gaze at me from the top of a pillar; in another, a howling imp tracked my footsteps like wild beasts,—and when I turned to face them, they were men maddened by solitude: until at last men and beasts, and devils and winds wailed and howled and danced around me, and I knew it was I who was mad and not they.

How long that time of horror lasted I know not—it seemed one endless night; and the first thing I was conscious of again was a gentle hand laying a wet cloth on my brow, and a calm, manly voice saying—

"I thank Thee, O God, in the name of Christ, for this sleep."

It seemed like waking in another world. A sense of God, and love, and rest, flowed in on my spirit, and I opened my eyes, and for the first time was able again to look. A man, not

many years older than myself, was bending over me—his face beaming with kindness as he returned my smile, and his eyes wet with pitying tears.

LETTER VIII.

THOSE were delicious days which followed my fever. I was left entirely to the care of Macarius, my new friend; and his single duty for the present being the care of me, and mine gratitude and quiet, our hearts became united in the strongest friendship. Our mountain home, mother, became familiar to him, and his history was spread before me, so that it seemed we had known each other from childhood. Left an orphan in early youth, in the luxurious metropolis of Antioch, he had speedily squandered his property in a life of wild abandonment to every kind of pleasure. Poverty came upon him suddenly, at a time when a pestilential epidemic was raging in the city;—he was seized with the plague. In the hospital, one of the monks who had left his desert to attend on the sick during the plague, awakened him to such a sense of his sins, that hell itself, he said, would have seemed a place of refuge to him, if he could have endured only the eternal fire there, and been delivered from the gnawings of conscience. He had nothing to offer in expiation of his sins; his expiation must therefore be entirely negative,

and consist in sufferings of the most fearful kind he could devise. He searched through the lives of saints — the monks of the Thebaid—the anchorites of Syria; but nothing of the various self-tortures enumerated there seemed to him unmixed enough. The pillar of Simeon was surrounded by sympathising crowds; the solitaries who wandered without roof or clothing through the deserts, eating roots like beasts, and crushing every faculty of their human nature, had variety, and the wild delight of braving storms, and watching the face of nature; in fasting, and tearing the flesh with scourges, or eating into it with iron crosses,—in any kind of self-inflicted pain he could imagine a sort of fierce pleasure. At length he heard of a device which he thought might answer. He would wall himself into a little cell, only leaving a little slit through which to breathe and receive his supply of black bread and water, too high to see any portion of the green earth through, and shaded outward so that no fragment of blue sky should gladden his sight—no star should twinkle even a moment there — no sunbeam creep kindly through. Here, without change, without variety, without sympathy, he would weep, and fast, and pray, without hope or fear beyond the possibility of being one day forgotten in his living tomb, and left to starve. Nearer than this he thought it impossible to approach to death without suicide.

He tried it, and endured it long without growing mad. At length, he said, one day, after how long he knew not, for he had lost count of time, a human voice addressed him through his crevice—he heard his own name. First he thought it a temptation of the devil's, and put his fingers in his ears. "But the voice would be heard; it appealed to me," Macarius said, "in the name of God, and I dared not refuse to listen. It was the voice of John Chrysostom. I had known his name well as the eloquent and holy presbyter at Antioch, and now he spoke to me with the authority of his episcopate—as Patriarch of Constantinople. He told me I was flying from my place in the army of Christ; that the vineyard of the Lord needed the diligent toil of every labourer, and I was laying up my talent in the dust, and refusing my hand to the work of God.

"I said I must work out my own salvation, and he knew not the depth of sin from which I had to toil to recover my lost ground.

"He told me I was an idler, living only for myself. He said we were commanded to let our light shine, not before rocks and deserts, but before men; and he spoke to me so of the love of God—tenderer than a mother's—and of the suffering the Saviour endured for me, that I began to see things in a new light. I began to perceive that God was more willing to save me than I was willing to be saved—that salvation

was not to be wrung from a reluctant Judge, but was offered tenderly, beseechingly, as by a Father delighting in His children. Old parables and scriptural narratives heard in my youth, and painfully read in darkness often since, flashed on me as uttered by the voice of love to me. The shepherd seeking the lost sheep—the father running to meet the lost son drawn back to his home not by love but by selfish hunger—melted my heart altogether. Could it be possible that I might live to serve God and man instead of living to escape hell? I suffered them to tear down the walls of my prison, and clasping the knees of John Chrysostom, and bathing his hands with tears, I promised him to do as he desired, to go to Antioch, and there accept whatever work might be assigned me in the mission he has commenced among the more remote parts of Phœnicia, where the Syrian peasants still adore and worship Baal on the high places. On arriving at Antioch, I was first sent on an errand to the monks at Bethlehem, and thus I met thee, and God has permitted me to minister to thee as the first-fruits of my long-delayed service."

"There is a difference, indeed," I said, "between mortality struggling to entomb itself, and mortality being swallowed up of life."

Thus in prayer, and reading the Scriptures, and wandering over the breezy hills, with narratives of the past, plans for the future, and hopes

of that future which rose gloriously before us above the uncertainties of earth, the happy days wore on. Not that thou shouldst imagine we agreed in opinion. Macarius was a zealous monk, and believed in many things which I could not find either in the Bible or the creation; but his asceticism was only the trembling fear of a heart that had fallen deeply, and the overflowing love of a heart that had been forgiven much; and in our prayers and hymns we were one,—one in faith in the love of God, and its great manifestation in the cross of Christ, and also in our reverence for that great and good man to whom he owed the happiness and usefulness of his life. Macarius never wearied in speaking of John Chrysostom, nor did I of hearing. Of all the men I hear to whom the eyes of men turn, and their hearts cling, none seems so to win my utmost love and reverence as this Bishop of Constantinople. In connexion with the controversies and strifes of the day, one hears little of him; there seems to be none of that eccentric virtue or untamed genius about him which makes Anthony the hero of monastic romance, nor much, perhaps, of that subtle and speculative intellect which distinguished Augustine. One does not hear of his curbing emperors, like Ambrose; or defining the faith of the whole Church, like Athanasius. He is not the founder of a system, nor the hero of a controversy. In the West and in Africa, I heard

little of him; but as I approach the centre of his influence, I find one and another ascribing to him the determination of the crisis on which hung all their spiritual destinies. His influence seems singularly personal, and therefore not so universal, nor, perhaps, so historical as that of the other great Church-teachers of the day; but in its circle, it seems more intense than any; and it appears to be not so much the dazzling attraction of extraordinary gifts — though this, no doubt, there is in him—as the enkindling power of that divinest gift of love, that most sacred influence of all, whose record is in the hearts of those it blesses, and in heaven. The men whom I have met, who can in any sense be called the friends of Chrysostom, speak more of the truths he taught them than of his orations; and seem to draw their strength more from the Bible to which he pointed them, than from the memory of his sayings.

Macarius was in Antioch, a young man, at the time Chrysostom was the Presbyter John, preaching in the great church there for Bishop Flavian; and he seems to connect any of the great events he recollects with those heart-stirring sermons. Macarius's mother was a woman of true piety; he was the only son of his parents. In his childhood, his mother used frequently to send him, under the charge of a faithful servant, to receive the blessing of a good old monk who lived on the hills near Antioch. My friend

recalls those visits as little sunny spots in his childish history, rich with a light from Heaven. The servant and the child would start in the cool of the morning from the city—the child carrying a white loaf, made by his mother's hands, for the monk. His mother's parting kisses—her smile as she watched him in the shadow of the doorway—the beautiful gardens by the river, with their orange and rose trees, through which the road lay—the fresh air on the open hills beyond—the greetings of the country people as they passed, in a language he could not understand (he being a Greek child of the city, and they Syrians), the wild flowers, the birds, and timid fawns pricking up their white ears and dancing away,—it was always so new and strange, and yet so natural. And then the old monk's grave and tender greeting, and the blessing which made the cave feel like a church, and the day like Sunday, and the awe with which he always accepted the old man's invitation to sit on his knee, and gazed up over his white beard into his kind eyes, always thawing into perfect familiarity before they parted; and the bunches of grapes which were drawn from some hidden storehouse, and the old man's stories, and his two or three quiet jokes, and his wonder at the child's intelligence; and before leaving, the reminding him how his mother had dedicated him to God as Hannah did her first-born, and the little hands clasped in prayer between the old

man's hard and wrinkled palms; the child's eyes fixed on the monk's, and the monk's on heaven, as he received from God and from the aged saint the benediction in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Then to be welcomed again on the threshold by that longing, loving face, and to pour out the day's history between her kisses, and promise her one day to be as good as this old monk, and hear fervent Amen. It was no wonder that on those days should rest a sense of innocent joy and associations, to which he often turned in his early orphanhood, but of which he dared not think in his days of reckless dissipation. Nor could I wonder that when he awoke from that fever of sin in the unholy city, holiness and monasticism were so inseparably blended in his aspirations.

He remembered one period later in his childhood, when that time of innocent dreams had passed, and his early home was broken up, and he lived in the house of a guardian, and was led to school every day by a slave or pedagogue, who taught him his lessons as he went. There had been riots in the city on account of the taxes; a senator's house was burnt; the statues of the Emperor Theodosius, the Empress, and the two royal children, Arcadius and Honorius, had been torn from their pedestal, dragged through the streets, and ground to pieces. Within a few days, the mob awoke, like a wilful

child after some wild freak, to a sense of its offence and its danger. Antioch was wild with fear, as it had been with rage. The character of the Emperor, though just and generous, was said to be stern, and resentful of any affront to his imperial dignity. (Three years afterwards the wretched inhabitants of Thessalonica proved it.) There was not a thought of defending the city; all trades not necessary for subsistence languished; the schools were emptied, the rhetoricians silent, the circuses and even the baths deserted. People thronged the streets, not in noisy crowds, but in anxious whispering groups, afraid to stay at home, yet increasing each other's terror by thus assembling. The only resource was in the intercession of the clergy with the Emperor. Theodosius was religious, and a true son of the Church; the Bishop was venerable and respectable. Bishop Flavian accordingly sped with all haste to Constantinople. In the midst of this agitation, whilst the Bishop was on his mission of mercy, and the unknown doom hung over the city, Lent began. John Chrysostom was preaching in the cathedral; thither the people thronged night and morning. He made no effort to lessen their sense of danger; he held out to them no empty hopes of a possible pardon. He held before them their sins, their perjury, luxury, hypocrisy, heedlessness. He shewed them beyond the doom they dreaded, another doom which there was no escaping. He pointed

out the terrors of the holy judgment of God, so as to make them feel the sentence of the Emperor a mere passing breeze in comparison. He told them he dreaded for them, not the Emperor's vengeance, but their forgetfulness; yet the more terribly earnest his warning became, the more the terror-stricken people thronged the churches; darling sins were given up; mockery was silenced, whilst terror stripped the mask from the most artificial, and arrested the lightest, shivering alike the hypocrisy of levity and of sanctimoniousness. People fasted and prayed; the rich entreated the blessing of the poor, and the poor scorned the alms of the rich. And in the midst of all, daily and nightly, arose Chrysostom's voice, like the first note of the trump of judgment. He had also other tones; and there were, doubtless, hearts among his listeners who could rejoice when he told them that the furnace was nothing if the Son of Man stood by them in the flames,—who rose to the exalted yet most calm and real faith with which *he* could say that poverty, sickness, shame, and even death were to the wise mere names, the only real evil being to grieve God and do what displeased Him. For Chrysostom never commands men merely to leave sin, without pointing out the joy of holiness. "And I remember," said Macarius, "the thrill of positive bliss which ran through me one day, as he spoke of that joy in God which no weapon of Satan could pierce—

stronger than any shield. One day," he continued, "our terror was brought to its height by the news that some imperial legions were approaching with an order to sack the town. Many had already fled, now many more followed, and the rest repaired to the church, more because the instinct of fear impelled them to congregate, than from any sense of taking refuge with God, for the church was filled with their cries and sobs, so that the heathen governor was obliged to enter the building to pacify the people with the assurance that the rumour was false. I remember to this moment the indignant eloquence with which, on the next Sunday, Chrysostom reproached them as Christians for needing the consolations of the heathen governor,—an indignation which we knew in him was but the first of his watchful, ceaseless, glowing love for the Church, and his desire she should not dishonour her Lord. At length came what we all believed was the foretaste of our doom. Before the Bishop reached Constantinople, the imperial commissioners had left with directions to institute the most stringent inquiries. The only thing left any to rejoice in now seemed their insignificance or poverty. The richest and noblest families in the city, ladies who only appeared in splendour at the theatres, or at the circuses, might be seen thronging the places before the judgment-hall, weeping and bemoaning fathers, husbands, brothers, subjected to the rack, or

cast into dungeons. At this juncture, there appeared in the city some of the monks from the hills in their shaggy garments, free from all cares of their own, to calm the anxieties of the citizens. Accustomed to be alone with God, they feared not the Emperor. One of these Macedonians, an old grey-haired man, who had dwelt for years in communion with God, stepped boldly up to the two deputies as they rode through the streets with the train of soldiers, and laid hands on the reins of their horses. We, who were near, trembled for the result; but, to our amazement, the deputies quietly dismounted, and knelt before the monk as children entreating a blessing, and from one to another among us ran the report of the noble words he spoke.

"'Say to the Emperor, you are not only an emperor, you are a man. Think not alone of your sovereignty, but of your nature; for you are a man, and rule over your equals. Human nature was made in the image of God. You offend the Creator if you misuse His image. Think how you resent the ill-treatment of your image of clay. But every reasonable man can see the difference between the living, animated, and thinking image, and that which is lifeless. Remember also this: we can easily make many images of clay to replace that one, but for you it is altogether impossible to replace one hair of a murdered man.'

"The deputies were not unmercifully dis-

posed, they listened to the old man's remonstrance, and ventured to have pity, or at least wait further orders from the Emperor.

"Then came the day of joy. It was on an Easter morning that the pardon reached us. Joy seemed heaped on joy;—reconciliation for Antioch with the Emperor, and for the world with God! We heard, too, how the Emperor had pardoned us, and why,—not merely as a sovereign, but as a Christian. Chrysostom told us in his sermons that the Emperor had said—'Is it, then, a great thing that I myself a man, should soften my anger against men, when the Lord of the world, who came down to earth, and for our sakes took on Him the form of a servant, was crucified by them whose benefactor He was, and prayed to His Father for those who crucified Him, saying, Father forgive them, they know not what they do,—is it any wonder, then, that I should forgive my fellow-servants?' All this he told us in his Easter sermon. 'Praised be God,' he said, 'who doeth exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.' What an Easter that was!—tapestries on the balconies, carpets before the houses, flowers and lights, garlands and triumphal arches in the markets, it was like a birthday in every house! And what an Easter sermon that beloved, eloquent voice raised, in sympathy with our joy, seeking to guide it upward into thanksgiving! 'Illuminate your hearts with virtue, celebrate a perpetual

festival of spiritual joy, and let us not cease to give thanks to God for all things,—not only that He has delivered us from this tria., but that He suffered it to come; let us thank Him with our whole hearts. Let us never forget what we have learned from our own experience—that God, according to that love to man which is His character, ever guides all things for our good.'"

Then Macarius paused, and fell into deep thought. I said—"Those words must have sunk deep in your heart." "They did," he replied, sadly, shading his eyes with his hands. "I used to repeat them to my relations at first, because I felt them, and because I liked the applause my memory gained for me; and so I ceased to feel them, and fell. Of all sins," he exclaimed, "may God preserve me from that of weaving His gifts—His very truth itself—into ornaments, wherewith to deck myself. It is a serious thing to be concerned in any way with uttering the truth of God."

"And Antioch?" I asked.

"Many believed and turned to God," he replied, "but the judgment of the Emperor passed by, and in the city the judgment of God was forgotten. I remember one of Chrysostom's next sermons, after the pardon was rumoured, was an exhortation to the people not to murmur, because, as a token of the imperial displeasure, the baths and theatres were closed for a time!"

"But," I said, "I am now recovered enough for any journey, and I must see Chrysostom, and take some humble place of service under him."

"We will go together," rejoined Macarius; "I trust he may also find work for me. He says—'Where the storm is, the sailors are most needed.' And where the court and its vices are, the Church must surely often find a perilous and tempestuous sea. I have heard also that his fidelity and plainness have made him enemies at Constantinople, and I long to be by his side."

LETTER IX.

AT Joppa, we found a ship bound for the metropolis; she had coasted from Rome by Alexandria, and had on board two ladies of rank, with their suites; one—Synesia, a senator's lady from Rome, where she had gone on a visit to her family; and the other, whom they called Eulalia, returning from a pilgrimage to the holy places. The Lady Eulalia came on board after me; and it afforded me some amusement to watch the quantity of ecclesiastical trinkets and furniture she brought with her; baskets of earth from Jerusalem, logs of wood from Carmel, dried flowers, stones, and crosses in all materials, from all quarters of Palestine. The lady herself was in a delightful little bustle of anxiety about the shipping of these sacred curiosities; and having lavished sufficient energy in lamenting the stupidity of her slaves, and contradicting her own orders, to have accomplished the work, she sank languidly back on her silken cushions, and suffered herself to be fanned for some minutes with closed eyes. Macarius was too circumspect to watch any of

her proceedings, and fixed his eyes on the Life of Antony; but the pretty coquetries of the lady amused me considerably, and the searching inspections which, in the midst of her elegant languor, she contrived to make of her fellow-passengers. At length, having apparently finished her investigations, she employed half a dozen slaves in re-arranging her cushions, and addressed herself with an easy grace to Synesia. There were, besides, in the ship, a few merchants, a lady of noble appearance in a plain mourning dress, and ourselves. Eulalia apparently thought the rest of the company not worth her attending to; and her conversation with Synesia, accordingly, proceeded as freely as if we had been out of existence. Macarius was deep in his Life of Antony; the merchants gathered in business-like groups; and I, wrapped in my insignificance, leaned over the ship's side, and could not avoid hearing all that passed. They soon discovered they had met in the first society, and, therefore, endangered no compromise of dignity by knowing each other. Eulalia described her pilgrimage; the hardships, she confessed, were great; in several places, had it not been for the ingenuity of her European cook, and the forages of the slaves, she could scarcely have eaten anything. In lent, of course, one must fast; but on a journey human nature could not endure it; in the monasteries they had no idea of getting up a dinner. In some passages the roads were

execrable; and she had to close her eyes as her porters carried her litter. But then there was a recompense; to say nothing of the next world; the emotions one experienced were indescribable. The Church of the Empress Helena over the Holy Sepulchre was a paradise; such marbles and altar-plate, and the priests' dresses, and the incense—it was heavenly! The monasteries and cells of the anchorites, also, made the hills almost as good as the cities.

"I detest monks," said Synesia, honestly.

"St. Antony defend us! But your ladyship, I remember, is only a catechumen—to the uninitiated all those things take another aspect."

"I think the monks are a great deal worse than the Pharisees," rejoined Synesia. "I only wish, at least, their hypocrisy took the form of washing seven times a day."

Eulalia proceeded on another tack.

"Then the treasures one acquires of relics. I intend, when I return, to have a garden filled with Jerusalem earth, and an oratory on it entirely fitted up with woods and marbles from the Holy Land—a couch from Bethlehem—cushions from Antioch, and the marble for the floor from different mountains—Carmel, Tabor, Hermon. Will it not be charming? Come, Theodore, darling," she continued, calling to the nurse who carried her little boy, "and show the lady the reliquary with a little of the dust of the Prophet Samuel. It is a secret. The relics were on the

way to Antioch, and they would hardly spare me a grain."

"If you please," said the nurse, "the noble child would put the holy relics in his mouth, and we thought it might hurt the gold, or offend the prophet; so I took it off. He bit the Gospels hung round his neck yesterday nearly through, pretty darling!"

Eulalia seemed rather disconcerted, and changed the subject.

"You have heard the new Bishop, John of Antioch?"

"Three or four times."

"Could you have imagined anything like his eloquence? The whole city is in agitation about him; the Arians can scarcely lift up their heads. My husband hardly likes me to hear him, it affects me so intensely; and the other day, when he spoke of the Judgment-day, I thought the walls of the church would have fallen with the applause. I never heard anything like it, even at the great games at the circus; such a heaving of bodies and tossing of hands and plumes. The bishop himself said it was like the theatre; indeed, some people say he does not like it."

"He is too eloquent for me," said Synesia.

"Well, I have heard some severe critics call him a little too rhetorical; but what would you have? Half the preachers send one to sleep, and if there is not to be a little life in the church, who will go?"

"It was not that I meant," said Synesia; "he is not too flowery, he is too plain for me. If I were to hear him often, I should have to give up everything—theatres, circusses, parties, and a hundred other little innocent amusements. To be one of Bishop John's Christians, one might as well be a nun at once."

"Perhaps he is a little severe," replied Eulalia, languidly; "but one must make one's own allowances — every one knows his own affairs best. Yet I confess I do think him a little strict. I arranged the most perfect little party for him the other day, such as I could have asked the Emperor to—ministers, generals, prefects, chamberlains, men of unexceptionable rank and respectability, for you know he is of good family, and one need not be ashamed for any one to meet him; but he would not come near us. They say he dines alone every day on black bread and brackish water. Then, unquestionably, he is inconsistent. He told us one day to study the Bible for ourselves as much as the priests,—senators, soldiers, and women; quite absurd, you know! And yet another day, he said the Gospels we hang round our children's necks were no better than heathen charms. And certainly he has been very harsh to some of the deaconesses. A friend of mine, a sweet creature, lately widowed, and portioned by the Church, assured me his interference with her little gaieties and indulgences is almost intol-

erable. Perhaps she was a little imprudent, poor thing! Ill-natured people are always busy; but I confess I could not have myself endured such an intrusion."

"He is making himself enemies enough," rejoined Synesia. "I know, from the best authority, the Empress hates him. One of the officers of the court had opposed her Majesty, unjustly, no doubt, and she had his estates confiscated. He died, and the Empress had a fancy for a little vineyard belonging to his widow—it was prettily situated. Most people would have felt honoured by such a preference; but the woman was obstinate, and would not give it up. One day, therefore, the Empress drove thither, and exercised her imperial right of claiming possession by eating a few of the grapes. Of course, she gave full compensation. But actually the Bishop had the insolence, I am told, from the pulpit to denounce the Empress as Naboth, or Jezebel, or somebody of the kind; at all events, to use very improper language about her, which is not likely to be soon forgotten."

"You astonish me," exclamed Eulalia; "I certainly did think the poor man a little severe, perhaps one might say pharisaical; but who could have conceived such audacity?"

"It will have its reward, you may be sure," replied the unbaptized lady.

"Every faithful subject would desire it," responded the latter; but the ladies drew closer,

and then the conversation fell into lower tones, so that I could not hear any more.

But you should have seen Macarius that evening, when, Synesia having retired for the night, Eulalia came to ask his blessing beforefollo wing her example.

"My blessing would be of little value, madam," he said, "to the enemy of the noblest, lowliest, most tender-hearted, most honest, and holiest servant our Lord has on earth."

The pilgrim to Bethlehem and Calvary drew her mantle haughtily around her and passed on. And in a few minutes we heard from within the little room to which the ladies had retired the sound of low and scornful laughter.

"My good friend," said I, "I thought you were deep in the deserts of the Thebaid with the holy Antony."

"Antony himself could not have kept his thoughts together," was the reply, "amidst such a clatter of wicked, false, and poisonous tongues. A score of devils would be less distracting. And it is among the tents of Kedar and habitations of Mesech that lofty soul has to dwell," he groaned.

The lady in mourning, who had been meanwhile silently wrapping herself up for the night, intending apparently to keep a vigil with an old female servant, drew near us, and said in a low voice, every tone of which was music—

"Have you a blessing for a friend of Bishop

John? one who owes him all the happiness and usefulness of her life?"

"God surely has a blessing for such," was Macarius's faltering reply; "at least if He has a blessing for me."

Poor Macarius! there is likely to be no lack of battles and storms for him at Constantinople. But that sweet lady, the widow or deaconess Olympias! She is still in middle life. She was of a noble heathen family, and brought up a Pagan. Widowed in her early youth, her sorrows led her to the Comforter, or rather drew her from the world. She gave herself up, like Cornelius, to fastings, and alms, and prayers, following faithfully all the light she had. Sorrow, and this unwonted hardness of living, with the persecution of her still heathen relations, nearly broke down her health. She was in this state when Chrysostom became Bishop of Constantinople. He led her to the true path of peace, shewing her how all she had, wealth, youth, fortune, was given her by a gracious Saviour to use for Him; that the true service of God was not to inflict suffering on herself, but to bestow blessings on others; that the poor were not a kind of magazine where treasure, however bestowed, was sure to be hoarded up for heaven, but the deputies of Christ on earth, needing help; that our Lord did not say, "Ye *feasted* me," but, "I was an *hungered*, and ye gave me to eat." Her whole course of life was

changed; she began to manage her property as carefully as she would have done for an infant son, for God; to give where it was needed, to build churches on her lands, to assist poor priests instead of feasting rich ones, to assist the Bishop's beloved missions in Asia, among the Syrian country people, to visit the sick and poor, and to deny herself, not from a stoical renunciation, but from Christian love. Two spirits so similar as Macarius and Olympias are sure to find means of working together, and I trust there is other work opening on him than warfare. As for me, if it may be, I am resolved not to become one of the regular clergy, but to accept something of the office of a parabolanus or visitor of the sick, with or without the name. My own experience has taught me how sacred a work this may be, and it will leave me more unfettered than any higher office.

Olympias confirms the worst fears of Macarius as to the unpopularity of the Bishop with a large faction of the citizens and court; he is a man to be either loved devotedly, or hated as sin must hate light. Many of the rich and noble detest him on account of his continual denunciations of their oppressions; the beggars, and those who make a trade of their apparent misery, dislike him as heartily; the worldly clergy and the proud ascetics are equally sincere in their detestation of him; and when we add to this all those who envy his eloquence, or dread his rebukes,

with the train of busybodies and flatterers who must belong to some faction, and commonly find the worst the most convenient,—you can conceive that the patriarchate of the metropolis is no bed of roses to Chrysostom.

Olympias has told us two new anecdotes about him. Eutropius, lately the first chamberlain, and virtually prime minister over the easily led Emperor Arcadius, himself a slave of the lowest extraction, disappointed in finding the new bishop not a man to be made a tool, but one who cared more for the chamberlain's soul than for his favour, became his enemy. Thou shouldst know that the churches have become what the cities of refuge once were—sanctuaries for those accused of crimes by powerful prosecutors. Repeatedly had Chrysostom asserted this sacred right in favour of the victims of Eutropius. At length the chamberlain wrung from the Emperor the decree declaring the churches deprived of this blessed guardianship. Soldiers might henceforth drag the accused from the altar itself. Not long after this, by a series of court intrigues, or, as thou wouldst say, by the decree of One mightier than emperors, Eutropius himself fell into disgrace, not a friend remained to him, and he fled from the cries of troops and populace demanding his death, in the theatres and amphitheatres, to the church of Chrysostom.

The sacred asylum he had endeavoured to violate was preserved inviolate for him;—the

Bishop would have defended it with his blood. Olympias was present on the next Sunday, when, with the wretched Eutropius cowering beside the altar he had endeavoured to render no safeguard, Chrysostom addressed his congregation, which thronged every part of the building, on the vanity of human greatness. "Truly ever," he said, "but above all now, is it time to exclaim—'Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.' It should be written on our walls, on our garments, on our markets, on our houses, on our streets; but above all, in our consciences." And what a silence thrilled through the vast congregation as he continued, turning to Eutropius—"How often have I said to thee that wealth would fly away—that it was a thankless servant! But thou believedst not. So experience has now taught thee it is not only a thankless servant, but an assassin. This it is that has brought thee trembling here, that the Church thou hast fought against might receive thee in her bosom." Then appealing to his people, he described to them the vicissitudes of the suppliant's life,—exciting their compassion.

"Greater than all triumphs for the Church is this," he said, "that, braving the anger of the Emperor, the rage of the people, the hatred of all, she takes under her protection her captive enemy, abandoned of all beside. People say," and Olympias said his attenuated figure seemed to expand as he said the words—"People say it

is not fit that the avaricious and the robber should touch the altar. Say not so—for the sinner touched the feet of Christ, and Jesus gave her no reproof, but admiration and praise; for the impure and unholy could not injure the pure but the pure and holy made the unholy pure by His touch. Think not, O man, of vengeance! We are servants of Him who said on the cross —'Forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Let us fall at the feet of the Emperor, let us each call on that God who loves man, to soften the heart of the Emperor to pity. He has done great wrong—we deny it not; but now is the time not of judgment, but of mercy,—not to require reckoning, but to exercise love,—not to claim rights, but to shew grace.

Yet after this the troops continued furiously to demand the death of Eutropius. The angry soldiery surrounded the church. Chrysostom remained firm in his trust in God, and would not give up the suppliant. He himself was seized by the soldiers, and dragged before the Emperor; but the sanctuary of his church remained inviolate; and it was not till Eutropius himself, with the distrust of a heart that could not thus have pardoned, fled from the church, that his enemies could get hold of him.

Olympias told us also of the influence of this noble Christian man on Gainas, chief of the Gothic troops—an Arian, to whom Chrysostom had refused the use of one of the churches. Yet

when Gainas had led the Goths into a revolt in Thrace, and none else could venture near his camp, the Emperor and Empress forgot their enmity against the Bishop, and induced him to go as mediator into the midst of the barbarians. He went, and the Arian and barbarian Goth received him with every mark of reverence, and brought his children to him, to share his blessing.

The Ladies Synesia and Eulalia did not appear again during the voyage; but the nurse often came and sate beside us, with the infant, and with him often came a timid little creature, his elder sister, Agnes, who clung to Olympias, with that irresistible attraction which draws children to the sincere and loving. There was something about this little one which made one feel she had not known much of love in the hollow court-life; and Olympias would sit for hours, talking to the little girl, and listening to her happy prattle. The nurse wondered to see her so talkative. One amusement, also, Olympias discovered, which afforded the child heartfelt delight. She unclasped a copy of the Gospel of Luke, which had been hung as an amulet around her neck. At first little Agnes hesitated about this; she seemed to think it very sacred, and she said—

"Do not take it away—it keeps me safe;" and lowering her voice, she added—"and keeps away the dark spirits at night."

Olympias' face, however, reassured her, as she answered—

"I will not take it from you, my child. I will open it to you;—it is a casket of jewels, Agnes, and I will shew you how to find them."

The little girl looked up in wonder.

"Did you ever hear the name of Jesus?" asked Olympias.

The child crossed her forehead, and clasped her little hands on her breast, as she had been taught.

"This is a precious little casket, Agnes, which holds many pearls, which dropped from His lips. Would you like to know how to find them?"

So the reading-lesson began; and the first word the little girl learned was the name of Jesus.

Then Olympias told her about the shepherds and the angels, and Mary, the blessed mother, and the Babe in the manger;—of the sick who were healed, and the little children who were taken in His arms and blessed, and the poor, sinful people who were forgiven and made good, and of the cross—(all the blessed histories we heard first, mother, from thee!)—the child listening with ever-deepening wonder and delight. The blessing of God came with those words. One thought seemed to take possession of the child's heart—that this Jesus, who did so much good, and suffered for us,—this God, who lives

in heaven,—loved her, a little child, and would be pleased if she did right, and grieved if she did wrong.

On the second evening, after she had sate an unusually long time silent on Olympias' knee, with her head resting on her bosom, Olympias bent over, and asked if she was tired.

The little girl did not answer for a minute, and then she said—

"I am afraid, lady, I often do something which must grieve Him."

"You must leave it off, darling!"

"Oh, but it is not a thing," said the child; "it is a thought—and I am afraid it is wicked to say it." Then raising her face close to Olympias', she whispered—"It is when my mother kisses and caresses my little brother, and does not look at me. I sometimes wish he had never come;—and yet," she added, pleadingly, "indeed, I love him truly;—what shall I do?"

Olympais said—"Pray to the blessed Jesus to bless your little brother, darling, and to love him, whenever that wicked thought comes, and try to do everything you can to make him good and happy. It is sweeter to love than even to be loved. God loved us, darling, before we loved Him; and that is what makes us love Him so much when we find it out. We must pray, and try to be like God."

With such converse the hours flew speedily on. The sun rose and set on the waves; the

evening star tracked them with its silver pathway; one fair island and headland after another appeared and vanished; the fresh breeze crisped the waters under our keel, as our boyish feet crisped the frost and snow on the mountains, and at length we glided beneath the churches and palaces of Constantinople, into the sheltered creek of the Golden Horn.

It was a hard parting between Olympias and the little Agnes.

"Where shall I meet you?" sobbed the child.

"You may see me at church," replied Olympias, kindly. "But take care of your casket of pearls."

The little girl looked up earnestly. "Is all you told me there?"

"All; and much more. Read it daily—pray over it, and it will become your best amulet."

LETTER X.

I HAVE seen and heard Chrysostom,—that one noble voice which has power to make itself felt through all the ambitions, and envies, and sin, and despair of this city. Constantine founded it—it was to be a Christian city—a consecrated place; no heathen songs were to be heard here; no angry strife, and no Christian was to suffer here. And now? Chrysostom, the one faithful minister of Christ among so many who seek only themselves, hunted down, calumniated, threatened, is the target for a thousand arrows, even bitter words; and carries on all his holy labours of love, and utters his noble words of warning and of encouragement, not knowing if each sermon may not be his last. Why should we wonder? God made a Paradise once, but there is none now. The Son of God preached in the streets of Jerusalem once, and seventy years afterwards it lay even with the dust. Yet why should we despair? From the children of that banished Eve sprang Abraham, and David, and the prophets, and in the fulness of time the Saviour, Christ the Lord; from that

doomed Jerusalem have gone forth the men and the message whence has sprung the Church and even here, what a band of loving fellow-workers the Bishop has gathered! I heard him first, not in the great church of St. Sophia, but among the tombs, in the cemetery outside the city. It was Good Friday; and the custom at Antioch of celebrating the death of Christ near where His martyrs sleep, is continued here Early in the morning, from workshops, and palaces, and the lowly dwellings of the poor, the inhabitants of Constantinople poured forth into the fields—and there, among the green tombs, the Bishop preached. "For," as he said, "since Christ has come, the whole world is purified, every place has become an house of prayer. Therefore Paul exhorts us with confidence to pray everywhere, lfting up holy hands. The world is purified! Everywhere may we lift up our hands in prayer; the whole earth has become holy, holier than the holy of holies of the Jews,—for where Christ is, there is heaven."

His form is rather spiritualised than enfeebled by the severity of his early asceticism, but you forget all of his appearance except his penetrating eye and his smile. His voice must be rich and full beyond the common range, and yet it is difficult to me to recall its tones. I feel a loving heart has spoken to my heart,—a clear intellect has shone into mine, a firm will has infused its energy into mine; and the love, and the light,

and the energy were from God, and led me back, not to Chrysostom but to God; so that when the "golden mouth" was closed, it left me not in silence, it had raised me to a higher sphere, where the voice of God carried on His servant's words. He is a man, not to create a party, but to build up the Church. Not that his character is pure light, with no predominating colour; impetuous, intense, fervent, he has little patience with insincerity. But had the Truth Himself? Like Him, Chrysostom has the tenderest patience with the sinner, and one of the accusations they circulate against him here is too like those old pharisaical reproaches, not to endear him to one the more. They say he preaches that men may sin again and again, and yet be admitted to repentance. Tenderness for the sinner from one whose life has been so blameless is, indeed, more than earthly!

Those words of his about the fitness of all places for holy uses, so delighted me, that when Olympias introduced me, and left me alone with him, I felt I could pour out to him all the perplexities of my heart about the contradictions of the Church. He sympathised, but more, I felt, with my grief than with the cause. He said—"You start from a disgust with the abuses of the celibate, as I began with a disgust at the worldliness and vices of the cities. I have learned that the city is a severer arena for Christian valour than the wilderness, and the trials thrust

on us a harder discipline than those we choose. Your training was on the mountains, mine in Antioch; that explains all. If, however you desire work for Christ here, we can provide you with it."

"I desire any lowly office that can be assigned me, but not ordination."

"Few of us would desire higher offices," he replied, "if we thought that we are called in them to be leaders and shepherds of our brethren instead of seeking honour and rest for ourselves. Think! one soul is so precious that the Son of God became man and suffered to save us. What punishment will it bring on us to ruin many souls! Believe me, my office is no easy one. Yet let me not discourage you. Why should we be cowards? No glory but has its shadow of danger. Nothing is worth so much as a soul, not the whole world. If you give a a thousandfold to the poor, you do not accomplish so much as he who has converted one soul. The heavens declare not the glory of God as one Christian may. The time of martyrdom is over—this is the time of preaching the gospel by life and word. In this you may now become like Peter or Paul; more than that—by this you may become a mouth through which Christ shall speak. There is no lack of work, and no dearth of blessing to those who desire to serve Him who loved man. Be a priest or not, according as you are called; every believer is a saint, and every child of God is a servant."

I am therefore installed as a fellow-worker with Olympias,—to visit the hospitals and the poor for her, to read the Scriptures to the ignorant—to befriend the strangers in the House of Charity which the Church has provided to welcome all needy travellers through the city; and with whatever fragments of work this may lead to, I have no fear of finding occupation enough; especially, however, for this reason. Every morning, I come to my heavenly Father for my daily work with my daily bread; I ask Him to lead my pathway by some who need help or teaching or comfort from His holy Word; and thus, whoever sets me my task, or wherever it is set, I know Who appointed it, and work on in the confidence of His blessing.

But with regard to the work appointed for all, I must tell thee of a saying of Chrysostom's, which I heard from the pulpit of the great church:—"A merciful man wears no priestly robe; but he wears the mantle of love to man, which is holier than any priestly robe; he is anointed with an oil which is mixed of no earthly compound, but prepared by the Divine Spirit; instead of bearing on his forehead a band marked with the name of God, he himself is made like God, for the Lord says, 'So shall you be like your Father in heaven.' Would you see his altar? No Bezaleel has built it, but God himself,—not of stones, but of a substance more glorious than the heavens, even of living souls,

The Priest alone treads the earthly sanctuary. But thou, when thou bringest thine offering, canst enter a nobler sanctuary than that, where none is present but thy heavenly Father, who seeth in secret—where no other eye can penetrate."

May I not be easy as to his ever returning in heart to the dispensation of the letter, which killeth? And again, to the monks, he said—"How much better were it that thou shouldest even lose something for thyself, and win others thereby, than that thou shouldest remain on thy height, and let thy brother perish? Like the servant who hid his Lord's talent, though thou fastest, sleepest on the earth, strewest thyself with ashes, and ever mournest, if thou art of no use to others, thou doest nothing great. Consider the holy men of old. Moses worked many miracles; but nothing made him so great as that one admirable saying—'Forgive Thou their sins; and if not, blot me out of Thy book.' And David—'I have sinned: but these sheep, what have they done? Let Thy hand be against me and my father's house!' Love," he continued, "was the best gift, and without it all else were nothing."

May I not be easy as to the monasticism of this man?

And on New Year's Day, when all the city was in a tumult of joyous excitement with gifts and visits and noisy festivities,—to those who

came to commence the year in the church, with God, he declared—"To observe days, is not Christian wisdom, but heathen delusion. Thou art enrolled among the number of the citizens of that City which is above. There is the state to which thou belongest. Thou art associated with angels. There it is not a light which ends in darkness—nor a day which loses itself in night; there it is ever day—ever light!"

And in a sermon at Pentecost, he said—alluding to the crowding of churches at Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost, compared with their frequent desertion at other times—"It was a Jewish ordinance only to appear three times in the year before God. We Christians should continually appear before our God. For us, all seasons are festivals. Our first feast is the Epiphany. What is the object of this feast? That God appeared on earth, and dwelt among men: that God the only-begotten Son was with us. But that He is always, for He hath said—'Lo, I am with you alway: even to the end of the world.' Every day, then, may we keep this feast. What does Easter signify? That we proclaim the death of our Lord: that is Easter. But this also is limited to no season. For when Paul would free us from the bondage of seasons, and shew that the Passover Feast may continually be kept, he said—'As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till He come.' Since, then, we

may always shew forth the Lord's death, we may always keep Easter. Why do we keep to-day's festival? Because the Holy Spirit has come down to us. As the only-begotten Son of God is with the faithful, so also is the Spirit of God. For Christ says—'If ye love Me, keep My commandments; and I will pray the Father, and He will send you another Comforter, that He may abide with you always, even the Spirit of Truth.' Since, then, Christ hath said that He would be always with us till the end of the world, and that the Holy Spirit should be always with us, every day may we keep the Epiphany —every day may be a Pentecost. All seasons are, for the Christian, festivals, on account of the unspeakable blessings which have been bestowed on us. For what goodness has not been shewn thee! The Son of God became man for thy sake; He has delivered thee from death; He has called thee into the kingdom of heaven. How, then, should not thy whole life be a festival? Let none be cast down because of poverty, sickness, sorrows; for we live continually in a time of festival; every day to us is a feast and a holy day."

All places holy to him who prays, because of the redemption Christ has wrought; all states and occupations holy, if consecrated to His glory; all days holy, because of His presence!—what could St. Paul say more? And yet both Chrysostom and Olympias the deaconess, are

heart and soul in the ceremonies and ordinances of the Church as at present constituted,—believe in the miracles wrought by relics, — in the priestly order,—in the mediation of departed saints,—in the far-surpassing sanctity of an unmarried life,—in the profitableness of monastic asceticism. They accept the Bible as the only rule of life, and storehouse of truth, and yet believe in all those things which seem to me not only not there, but forbidden there! How can this be accounted for? Do they indeed believe in both? They accept the received Church traditions and customs; but their belief—the reliance of their hearts—is surely placed far higher. The light they derive from Christ clothes them as in a garment, and they only see Him in all those things:—the High-priest in the priests—the Truth in the elaborate symbolism, — the Saviour in the saints, — communion with God in monasticism. The living well of water springing up within them borders itself with green, and they see the freshness around them, and know not that it came with them. Chrysostom thinks, indeed, that the dead saints intercede, and we may ask their intercession; but he is *sure* the Saviour is infinitely more gracious than all the saints: for, as he said the other day from the pulpit, in explaining the miracle of the daughter of the Syrophenician woman — "He listened not to the disciples, but to the woman; he delighted to draw her on from them to Him-

self, and He granted her petition, delaying only that He might develop her faith, and double her blessing." Working for his clergy; reproving, exhorting, guiding, praying, and labouring for his flock; communing with God, through his holy Word; caring for missions among the Baal-worshippers of Phenicia; mediating between contending bishops; comforting the widow and the fatherless; pleading for the oppressed; and through all this opposed and thwarted continually,—Chrysostom has to take his times and his tools as he finds them, and to work with them while it is called to-day.

Yet, is error merely negative? or is it indeed a mighty weapon for evil in the hands of him who was a liar from the beginning?—as the Word of Truth is surely the mightiest agent for good with the Spirit of Truth. Is falsehood a vacuum, or is it a poisonous malaria? And is it of no moment that Chrysostom with one hand points to the living Word of God, and with the other upholds a system of external ceremonies which contradict it? Time will prove. It is fearful to think, that when Chrysostom, through the merit of the crucified Saviour he loves, shall stand accepted in the sight of God, and with him many led by him to the same Saviour, the system of earthly priesthood and external purifications which he promotes may be growing and working to hinder and mar the work of Christ in the world. But does Chrysostom himself

suffer nothing by his mistakes? Can he receive so many unscriptural doctrines without having his own joy in God lessened, and his own strength for service paralysed? Nay, surely to the Christian every truth lost is a joy lost—a weapon of warfare and a means of service the less. Much as I love the Bishop, my view of this camp of confusion they call the city of God is unchanged. The world remains the world—at enmity with God, though adopting the sign of the Crucified. From a rebel she has become a usurper,—all the more to be abhorred the more she adopts the insignia of Him into whose throne she intrudes. But the Church remains the Church, distinct and imperishable. Chrysostom, Augustine, and Vigilantius, Olympias, and many lowly hidden ones, are gathered one by one to Christ, and find, as He did, the world a place of warfare and pilgrimage and trial.

Chrysostom may indeed receive life from believing in the Son of God; and the baptism he calls the water of life, be to him, as to Augustine, merely the obedience of a regenerated soul to the commands of its God. But to the multitudes, I fear, the sacraments he so exalts are indeed idols substituted for God. What else can I think, when I see many indulging in every kind of sin, with the intention of washing all the stain away by a deferred baptism? and others, from whom baptism has not removed the con-

science of sin, struggling on to remove, by solitary penance and bodily torture, the sins they feel still reigning in them?

The whole dreary system of monasticism seems to me the protest of the natural conscience against the fiction of magical sanctification by water.

The truth by one touch destroys both. Believing in Him who has purged all our sins, and is our perfect righteousness, we are in Him beloved and accepted by God. The Holy Spirit, the earnest of the inheritance given to all who believe, lifts our hearts in joyful love to our forgiving Father. We love the holiness He loves —and the sin we hate, God fights against with us. And thus, for all the elaborate system of rules, ecclesiastical or monastic, we receive from our Lord two comprehensive directions for safety and holiness:—"Believe in Me:" that is salvation; "abide in Me:" that is sanctification.

Meanwhile, I would, as far as I may, work immediately with the Word of God on the souls of men, refusing help from no quarter, but bound up with no system. And thus with immortal beings to serve and the eternal God to live for, the changing fashions of the world pass lightly by, whether it be a world calling itself a church or not.

And if ever it is God's purpose that there shall be a simplification of all these laborious ceremonies, and a disencumbering of the life

from all the excrescences which check its growth, I think the reformer will not receive his commission whilst meditating on the abuses of the age and the world, but whilst doing his daily work, and finding hindrances in it.

LETTER XI.

THIS morning, when, after the preliminary service, the mere hearers and catechumens had departed, and in the midst of the solemn silence which succeeded the last departing footsteps, the priest stood high on the altar-step, and said in a clear voice, "Holy things to the holy!" and all the people answered, "One only is holy —Jesus Christ the Lord!"—I felt almost sure that I recognised, among those that remained, the bronzed, furrowed face of my old friend the Gothic soldier. When the Eucharistic feast was over, and the communicants were departing, the wild, shaggy face was still there, resting on the hard, muscular hand, as the soldier leant in the shadow of a pillar. His eyes were fixed at first on the bishop, but when the bishop left, he still remained. Just then the rustling of silks caught his attention, and Eulalia passed, glittering with gold and jewels. Behind her demurely walked little Agnes holding her nurse's hand; but as she passed the old soldier, the little girl's downcast eyes were raised, and with a friendly little nod, and a happy childish smile, she greeted

him. The Goth returned her recognition with his most reverent military salutation, and as his eyes followed the child, the reflection of her sweet and peaceful looks seemed to rest on his face. Then, when the little form was lost in the porch, he left the shadow of the pillar and went after her. I followed him.

"Is it you?" he said, recognising me the instant I touched his shoulder. "I looked for you often in Rome."

"What brought you into this church?" I asked.

"At first an angel," he said quietly, "and then the bishop."

"I think I have seen your angel," I said.

"Not as I have seen her," he replied; "not reading those holy words she reads to me, until their glory passes into her face, and she looks up with her large, grave, happy eyes, in my face, and asks me if I see it! It is only then you see her as she is. Come with me to my lodging."

So I went; and he told me all that had happened to him. He was a man of few words. "I had a son," he said; "his mother died before I left my home in the north. Such hearts as hers—so true and warm—one does not find here. My boy was the darling of our company in his childhood. He grew up amongst us, and we taught him all we knew—good and harm—but I kept him from the harm as well as I could.

If I had fallen into the base sins of those effeminate cities, none the less should he be a hero after our own fashion in the north, where it is held a cowardice not to be able to conquer oneself. He grew up so noble,—as brave as Thor, and as good as his mother. At last he was sent on a forlorn service against some of our kindred tribes in the north. They like to set us against each other, like wild beasts in the games. He came back, but wounded,—no more the same man. I nursed him every day, and at length he was able to walk again. I used to take him to the cemetery, outside the city, to get fresh air and rest on the seats there. I suppose he looked very ill, though I thought him gaining strength every day; for one day my angel child stopped and spoke to us, and asked if he was ill. She had passed us and looked at us often before, and he had said she was like a child of the north, she was so fair and looked so true. She told us she had a little brother who once looked as *he* did, and her mother had taken him away for change of air to the hills, and he was well again. And if we would like to go to the hills, she should like to help. There was money glittering in the little hand she stretched out. I felt inclined to resent it; but he smiled and told her no change to the hills would do him good—there was but one change for him. She seemed to understand him, for tears gathered in her eyes. And how it came about I know not, but she and the nurse

used to come and see us in our home often after that, and she read to him from a little book she carried round her neck, till he looked for her coming more than for the light, and died with words from that book on his lips, meeting death as joyfully as any victor could have met him leaning on his sword. His was no woman's death, though he died on a bed; and he spoke not of battles to be fought, but of a victory which had been won for him, and of One slain, yet living evermore, the King whom he was to serve for ever. I did not understand then, but I do now. At first my heart was bitter, and I cursed the Romans and myself for sacrificing him, and blessed no one, not even the child. But she came still to see me, and at last she made me go to the bishop's church and hear him preach. I had no mind to go, for what are these empty strifes about words to me now? My old faith in the fighting gods, and the unpitying Nornas weaving the thread of life by the tree of life, and Hela, the dark goddess in the icy death-palaces, was stronger in my heart than all the creeds they fought about. But the bishop's words were unlike all these—there was life and heart in them. I liked him from the first. The first sermon I heard him preach was on the great fast; and words of fire they were. He told the rich that the rust of their riches was eating into their souls, that none of them had more than a life-interest in their possessions, and that the Almighty God

was the only proprietor, and they wasted what belonged to Him, and would have to give account. He pleaded for the widow, and fatherless, and the oppressed, as if he had been pleading for his own flesh and blood. He said much also to me about my sins, and I could not take my eyes off him, although I knew it was like confessing all to him; but what mattered that? God knew my sins, and I knew them to be sins as well as the bishop; and since the Judge knew them, it mattered little who else did. But the pleasure to me was to see him tear the mask from the smooth-tongued sinners; to see the smiling, insincere faces of the great ladies and the nobles grow white as he spoke; and to hear him tell the monks they nourished passions worse than those they quelled; that envy and guilt, slander and pride, and avarice, and all the sins which respectable men entertain, were as base in God's sight, or baser, than the vices which they professed to abhor. I enjoyed that, for my heart was bitter as any Pharisee among them. But I went again. Then I heard a new thing. I know not if others preach it. It came to me first from Chrysostom. He said God was *love;* that He loved man more than a father loves his children. The *more* seemed hard to believe; yet when he went on to say what we had deserved, and what God had given up, even His only-begotten Son to suffer for us; what He had contentedly endured to blot out our sins by

His passion, despising the shame for the joy of saving us—'like an innocent man undertaking to die for another sentenced to death, and so delivering him from punishment;' when I heard that He had 'not only ranked us as those that had not sinned, but as those that had wrought righteousness,'—I could find no word against it. There never had been sacrifice or love like that. I forgot then all about the hypocrites; what hatred could live in the sight of love like this of God's? It was so new. Do you also believe this?"

"I do," I replied; "it is this which makes all days to us feast-days."

"I went often after that," he contiued, "as you may suppose, every day, fast-day and feast-day; and when one day the bishop had a service for us, barbarians as they call us, in one of the churches, in our own language, I could not help asking to be allowed to go to the feast of thanksgiving, and to receive the sacrament of my Lord for myself. And they admitted me. But blessed as it is to hear the holy words in my own mother tongue, I go whenever I can to the great church to glean whatever I may of the words of the bishop, for I find none like them—none," he added, crossing himself, "but the Almighty's Himself."

"Do you read these?"

"I can make them out a little for myself," he confessed, with a smile of some shame at the

unsoldierlike accomplishment. "The bishop told us there was nothing like reading them for ourselves, and my angel-child taught me; so when she cannot come, I read for myself. But is it true," he said "that they are trying to hunt the holy bishop from the city?"

"It is said the court fear and hate him," I replied.

"It would be like them," he replied; "if there were a drop of Northern blood in the veins of these cowardly curled and perfumed citizens, who wave their plumes, and applaud him as they speak, no Emperor and no army could tear him from them."

"He will not desert them," I said.

"No fear of him!" replied the Goth.

And from that time I took up my abode with old Björn the Goth; and we planned many a scheme together for ending our days among his people, for they are dear to me as to him. I think the future of the world lies with them; and it would be glorious to carry among those wild, generous hearts the seed of the Divine Word, the message of the free love and unspeakable Gift of God.

It is this that inspires Chrysostom. He always breathes in the love of God, and in that atmosphere nothing false can breathe or live. What need of intercessors, priests, or saints, with Him who is love—the Saviour? What need of painful and elaborate penance to bring

back the wandering son to the bosom of the Father, who has been watching him, following him, loving him through all his wanderings? God, the infinitely Holy One, is love, and loves the sinner; Christ, the Holy One of God, is love, and died for our sins. What room, then, for any thing else between us and that love?

LETTER XII.

CHRYSOSTOM is sentenced to banishment. They will not hear of the love of God in this city. Yet how many have heard! What weeping and lamenting, and helpless clinging to the strong arm of faith on which they have been used to lean!

Björn is very angry, and a little unjust. He says a few drops of blood are worth millions of tears; and if the people were firm, the Emperor has no more courage or firmness than a hound; but they are all alike, except that none are so bad as the bishops and the women. In vain I represent to him that Chrysostom would not have a drop of blood shed on his account; that the heroes of the Church are martyrs, not soldiers—Stephens, not Joshuas, or Thors. In this respect, he very much prefers the Old Testament.

"Martyrdom," he says, "may be very well for the martyrs, but it is no honour to those who stand by and see the stones thrown."

"But the Bishop solemnly enjoined peace and submission to us."

"Very good for the Bishop!" replied Björn,

and he would admit no more. Wherever Chrysostom is, you may be sure to see Björn; in church, watching the door of his palace, though never a word or a look of recognition has that loyal heart received from the Bishop. Björn and Macarius—the Gothic soldier and the monk—the extremes of creation, the strong half-savage man and the puny emaciated ascetic, follow their hero's steps everywhere; and the other day I found them in the closest confidential talk. And to me it was a happy type of the gathering of all around Him whom Chrysostom serves,—no individuality lost, yet no peculiarity separating; love developing the most opposite characters, and uniting them.

But Olympias, going still about among her poor, seems to find no solace save in such works of love. There is no need for me to recount all the hateful petty intrigues, slanders, resentments, and envies, which have led to this; the indignation of the wordly Theophilus of Alexandria, because Chrysostom refused to condemn, unheard, some Egyptian monks who had taken refuge in Constantinople from his persecutions; the petty malice of the Empress Eudoxia; the mean gossip of monks and court-ladies, and of the herd of Pharisees who want to think themselves religious without loving man or God, and hate Chrysostom because he will not let them; the vengeance of the rich whom he has robbed of their prey, and the luxurious priests whom he

has deprived of their dinners by turning the charity of the widows and deaconesses in other directions. Such a history would be no better than any other mean and petty gossip; and yet, I know, much history is made up of such small scandal,—low comedy, ending alas! in deep tragedy,—in the breaking of true hearts, and the martyrdom of God's noblest men and women.

A council of bishops met at the Oak at Chalcedon, (themselves complainants, witnesses, and judges), and declared the Bishop guilty, among other impurities, of "calling the clergy dishonest and corrupt men, making themselves despised," (which he probably did many of them); "of refusing invitations to feasts; of not praying in secret" (so as to be seen); "of inviting sinners who had fallen twice, to repent again;" "of receiving heathens;" "of giving the communion to some not fasting;" "of exciting the people to insurrection against their synod;" "of calling the Empress Jezebel,"—(that is, probably, Chrysostom giving the character, and the court making the application.)

Chrysostom remains, meanwhile, peacefully in his dwelling, forty bishops devotedly attached to him surround him,—a fact which has a little softened Björn towards the clergy. The Patriarch denies the authority of the Synod, which is composed of bishops collected at random from all quarters, united only by the tie of jealousy of him; and he says nothing but violence shall

tear the shepherd from the flock over which he believes God set him.

To-day I heard him preach in the Greek church. He sought to calm the weeping multitude. "The waves are many," he said, "and the current is strong, but we fear not to sink, for our feet are on the rock; let the sea rage, it cannot dissolve the rock; let the waves tower on high, the ship of Jesus cannot sink. What shall we fear? Death? 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Or exile? 'The earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is.' Or the loss of earthly goods? 'We brought nothing into the world, nor can we carry anything out.' Let nothing that happens trouble you. Let only faith stand firm. See ye not Peter walking on the waves, and how, when he doubts, he begins to sink, not from the might of the waves, but from the weakness of his faith? Because the city stood firm, Satan seeks to shake the Church (he alluded to a recent earthquake). Thou couldst not shake the walls, and thou hopest to prevail against the Church? For the Church consists not in walls, but in the company of believing men. Nay, over one such, Satan cannot prevail. Hearest thou not what the Lord saith, 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I?' Where so great a Church, then, is bound together by such love, must He not surely be? I have a pledge from Him. I trust not in my own strength; I have

a written promise from Him. This is my staff, my security, my haven beyond the reach of the waves. To this I hold fast, let the whole world rage against me. And what is this? 'Lo! I am with you always, to the end of the world.' Christ is with me, whom should I fear? Though the waves of the sea, and the rage of the rulers of this world are against me, all this to me is more frail than a spider's web. Were it not for the love of you, I would not refuse to go even to-day, for I am ever saying, 'Lord, Thy will be done—not this or that, but what Thou wilt!' That is my fortress—that is my immovable rock—this is my staff that cannot be broken. If God will that this should be, let it be. If He will that I remain, I will thank Him. Wherever He wills that I should be, I will thank Him; let no one be disquieted. Only pray. These are the devices of the evil spirit to chill your zeal in watching and prayer. But he cannot ravish your pious zeal from you—those trials will only be the means of awakening your zeal and increasing your watchfulness. Should we be separated by space, yet love will bind us together. Death even cannot separate us; for if my body dies, my soul will live, and still remember the Church."

He said he was ready to lay down his life for his flock, and that was nothing more than the duty of a good shepherd.

All his glowing heart burst forth in that ser-

mon. Burning with the sense of the injustice of his enemies, and melted by the tenderness of his friends, yearning over the Church he was to be torn from, on which all the pent-up affections of his warm heart were poured forth, he meant to strengthen his weeping people with the expression of his own unshaken faith in God; he only succeeded in drawing their hearts with more passionate devotion to himself by making them feel how much they lost, and how unjustly he suffered.

But the words he addressed to his faithful clergy touched me beyond all. Olympias told me what he said, as well as her own tears would allow her. "Pray, my brethren," he said, "and if Christ is dear to you, let none desert his church on my account; for I shall soon be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I commend you to the Divine mercy. Remember me in your prayers."

But their sobs burst out afresh as he spoke, and many, unable longer to endure their anguish, silently left the assembly. "Sit still, my brethren," he exclaimed, "weep not, and break my heart no more, for Christ is my life, and to me to die is gain. Remember how I have ever told you this life is but a pilgrimage; its good and evil pass quickly by; it is all like a market. We buy and sell, and go away. Would we be better off than patriarchs and apostles? would we be immortal here?"

"But," exclaimed one of the bishops, "we mourn our orphanhood, the confusion in the Church, the loss of instruction."

Striking the first finger of his right hand on his left, as he used to do when lost in thought, Chrysostom replied—

"It is enough, brethren,—say no more,—but as I have said, desert not your churches. I was not the first teacher of the gospel, and I shall not be the last. When Moses died did not Joshua arise? Jeremiah departed from this life; was not Baruch there? Elijah was taken up to heaven; did not Elisha prophesy? Paul died the martyr's death; did not he leave Timothy, Titus, Apollos, and many others behind?"

Thus he seeks to make his exile a means of blessing to them, by pointing them to the inexhaustible source of his own strength, rejoicing, like John of old, if he decrease, so that their love to his Lord increase. And is it not on this account that God deigns to use him? He loves us too much to give us success when it would exalt us to that selfish height, where He never dwells.

The bishop, John Chrysostom, is gone; the world men call the church has recognised him as its enemy, and cast him out. Quietly, so that no disturbance might be created, when he heard the imperial forces were on their way to take him, (and thus the charge he believed it treachery to resign was snatched from him,) he escaped

through the church, and gave himself up to the officers. The court, however, resolved to defer his embarkation till the evening. By that time the people became aware their beloved bishop was a prisoner; they watched around the door of the house where he was, and followed him weeping to the Bosphorus. But his desire for peace was now too clearly known to be opposed, and no attempt was made at rescue. And to me there is a solemn joy, in seeing the world, in spite of all its false titles, thus imprint on the brow of Chrysostom the blessed sign of its persecutions.

My friend Björn, however, got into trouble by striking one of the guards, who, he thought, spoke disrespectfully of the Bishop, and would infallibly have ended the day in prison, but for a comrade of the officer, who struck him a blow in return, which stunned him so that they left him there for dead. Macarius and I brought him home, and the first words he said were—

"I know it was not what *he* wished, but it has made me feel more charitable to them all. If I had not struck one, I should have hated them all twice as much."

The next evening, when I returned to him from my day's travels among the valleys around, reading and explaining, Björn said—

"My angel-child has been here to-day, and I told her all."

"What did she say?"

"She did not say much; she read to me about Peter and Malchus in the night when they betrayed Him. But I asked her what one was to do for Him if one had nothing to use for Him but a pair of hands, and one was not to strike. She said, the blessed Lord told Peter, and if I asked Him, she was sure He would tell me; and she thought Chrysostom had spoken once of the Bible being the sword of God. And since she went," he said, rising on his couch, "I have asked Him, and I will not rest till I am back again beyond the Rhine among my own people; for Constantinople without the Bishop, is a desert full of beasts of prey. I must not fight for the Bishop, and I will not fight like a hired gladiator for this wicked court; so I must go home and tell my people what I have heard."

Olympias had herself come to-day to bring some little comforts for Björn, and was gently bathing his head when the little Agnes appeared at the door. The child rushed at once into her arms.

"I have looked for you so often!" she said, and a glow of joy suffused her delicate pale features. Then a sudden shade crossing them again, she clasped the lady's hand, and said in a low voice—"Tell me, you love the Bishop, don't you?"—Olympias smiled through her tears—"He smiles so kindly at me often," continued the child, "and it is sweet to hear him speak but he is gone, and I am afraid at home to ask

about him; but, tell me, will he ever come back?"

Olympias shook her head. "Pray that he may, my child. God loves such prayers as yours. Oh! pray that he may come back."

"Does He not hear your prayers?" asked the child, with an awe-stricken look.

Olympias shrank from the distrust her words had unconsciously expressed, and then answered calmly—

"Yes, my child, He hears us always; it will end well for the Bishop, and for us all."

They were silent some time, and then the child said—

"I have found many more pearls in my casket."

"Give me one, then."

The child repeated the history of the storm on the lake, and Jesus walking on the waves; and, as she spoke, a calm came over the face of Olympias I had not seen there for days, and and quiet tears coursed each other over her cheeks. The child knew not the peace which flowed with those tears, and she hid her face on Olympias' shoulder that she might not see them.

But Olympias said—"I will give you another, darling. 'Whosoever shall give to drink a cup of cold water unto one of these little ones, in the name of a disciple, truly I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' You have given me a cup of cold water, my child."

"I only said you something from the Book you opened to me," replied the child.

"But that Book," said Olympias, "is a well of living water. The Bishop says—'Those who dwell beside it are like trees planted by the rivers of water; the moist air cools their fevered brow; its waters quench their sins and their thirst; they know no decay, but are ever fresh and fruitful.' Remember that; every word of it is not only a treasure for you, it is a store of refreshment for others. God speaks through it, remember, even through the lips of a babe."

Thus, the Fountain is ever the same; and what are all our ministries on earth but a perpetual pointing to that, and clearing the way to it, filling our pitchers from it, and carrying its blessed waters one to another? For in this dry and thirsty land, not a stream of true comfort flows, not a drop quivers on the leaf, or is drawn in by the root to beam forth in the flowers, but springs from thence. With Thee is the fountain of life.

* * * * *

Constantinople is in a ferment. The faithful clergy meet for prayer in one place, the deaconesses in another; all spirit seems taken from the enemies of Chrysostom by his exile. There are solemn processions in the streets, of men clothed in mourning robes, chanting litanies; the people throng Chrysostom's church, but more to weep than to pray.

Meantime, from the Bishop one of the clergy has received a letter, comforting us with the comfort wherewith he is comforted. He writes —"As I was driven out of the city, I suffered none of those things to move me; but said to myself, If the Empress will banish me, let her banish me—'the earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is.' Should she cause me to be sawn asunder, let it be—I have Isaiah as my example; would she cause me to be thrown into the sea, I can think on Jonas; would she cast me into the fire, I have the three children in the furnace; should she give me up to wild beasts, I can think of Daniel in the den of lions; would she cause me to be stoned, let it be so—I have Stephen, the first martyr, for my pattern; does she desire my head, let her take it—I have John the Baptist before me. The Apostle Paul calls to me—'If I please men, then were I not the servant of Christ;' and David arms me by his words,—'I will speak of Thy testimonies before kings, and not be ashamed.'"

Thus he draws at once smooth stones and living waters from that brook of which he drinks by the way, and takes his true position as one of the cloud of witnesses of which the world is not worthy, and lifts up his head rejoicing. Silent indeed are church and city without that loving voice of faith. Yet the words are more precious than even that voice; and if we approach in silence to that secret place holier than

the Holy of Holies, whence Chrysostom draws his strength, shall we not ourselves hear the voice of God Himself take up the words His servant can no longer speak to us? Why else should He who delights in the voice of joy and health, bring all our music low? Why but that, listening to *Him*, we may bring a deeper tone into our future songs?

* * * * *

The tide is turned—Chrysostom is to be restored to us. Last night, in the dead of night, there was a great cry through all the city. There was an earthquake. I was startled out of my sleep, and thrown out of my bed. There was Björn standing beside me. He grasped my hands, and said—

"I knew something would happen. I knew the Almighty would not let them hunt the holy man to death. And now He has sent this."

There was no fear in his expression; he simply rejoiced in the earthquake as a proof that God was on the side of the just.

"With or without tokens," I said, "God is surely on the side of the good bishop; but think of the wicked city."

But Björn only smiled sternly. "They would not let me fight," he said, "and now the Almighty strikes the blow!"

"But, Björn," I said, as I hastily dressed, "think of the perishing multitudes—the ignorant—the lost sheep of this great flock. Think

of our sins and His forgiveness; let us pray."

The old man stood with clasped hands while we offered up a few words of prayer to the merciful God for those who loved Him, and for those who rejected Him in that great city.

Before we had finished, another rumbling sound came—another rocking movement, then a crash; and we stood amidst the split and tottering walls of our unroofed dwelling. We rushed into the street to find walls tottering and roofs falling around us, and bewildered multitudes crowding together in helpless terror; all that was safest in all other dangers, the most insecure in this; the very ground quivering beneath our feet, so that every long-established habit of trust seemed suddenly set at nought, every image and type of security became the source of terror; and, like helpless children in a world whose laws they knew not, like dreamers in a monstrous fever-dream, the whole city rushed hither and thither, only clinging to a delusive thought of flying from all they had been used most to trust. Well for those in that night whose trust was in the Everlasting Arms on which earth and heaven repose. We rescued some and comforted others; but man could do little there but utter the name of God. Some fled to the fields, some to the ships, some wandered hither and thither, torn between dread of life and love of all that made life sweet. Mothers clasped their babes;

hardened men cowered beside little children, as if seeking protection in their presence. But on most hearts and on many lips arose continually the cry—"The Bishop! the Bishop! the Almighty is avenging Chrysostom!"

As that fearful night drew to a close, and the shocks became less frequent, in the grey of the morning, Björn and I saw a dignified form moving rapidly towards us. It was Olympias; she drew aside her veil as she approached us, and exclaimed—

"There is yet mercy for the city; the Bishop is to return. The Empress's conscience was smitten, and she thought the earthquake a judgment for his banishment. She remembered that he had baptized her children. At midnight she obtained his recall from the Emperor, and now, already, the imperial messengers are on their way, not merely with a recall, but with a letter in the Empress's own hand, entreating the Bishop to pardon her, and throwing all the blame on evil counsellors. I heard it all from Brison, the good chamberlain, the Bishop's friend."

LETTER XII.

WHAT a day of joy this has been! how soon can God turn our mourning into rejoicing, and how willingly He does so! Truly, sorrow is but the passing shadow on the Christian's life, and his dwelling-place is in the fulness of joy. If, indeed, life were but one sorrow, what a passing shadow it would be on the face of the happy eternity of the children of God! Chrysostom is amongst us once more. There was more weeping at his return than at his banishment; tears of joy flow easily. At early dawn the Bosphorus was covered with ships, in which his people hastened to catch the first glimpse of the patriarch. In the harbour a procession awaited him with torches as for a marriage; old men and women, matrons, maidens, little children, thronged the streets through which he was to pass. Garlands, flowers strewn before him by hands too small to hold many; long shouts of welcome, and silent tears; a tumult of joy, yet of joy made childlike and deep by the sense that God smiled on it:—this was the good Bishop's greeting. He withdrew to an estate belonging to the Empress outside the walls, to await, he said, his reinstatement by the council of the Church. But his episcopate was too

deeply seated in the hearts of his people for them contentedly to wait for any such cold confirmation, and there was no rest to be had by court or clergy until Chrysostom stood once more in his own church, sate on his episcopal seat, and bestowed on them his fatherly blessing. Still, when the words had died on his lips, and his hands were no more spread over the silent congregation, they remained, and would not separate till they heard once more some of his own living words of counsel and comfort. Then he rose and said—"What shall I say? Thanks be to God! With these words I parted from you; these words I now take up again, or rather I have never let them go during all these days of exile. Do you remember how I told you of Job, and said to you—'Blessed for ever be the name of the Lord?' These parting words I left with you; these words of thanksgiving I resume—'Blessed be the name of the Lord for ever.' Things are changed; but the thanksgiving is the same. Departing, I praised the Lord; returning, I praise him. Circumstances change; but there is only one purpose through summer and winter; only one purpose—the prospering of the field. Blessed be the God who suffered me to depart; blessed again be He who called me back! Praised be the God who stilled the storm, and made a calm! I say this that I may teach you to praise God. If anything good happens, praise God, and the good remains. If

anything evil happens, praise God, and the evil will pass. Thus Job praised God when he was rich, and blessed Him when He became poor. In the first instance, he made no unjust gains; in the last, he blasphemed not. The times were changed, but his mind was the same. A calm could not make the high-hearted courage of the pilot slack, nor the storm cast him down. Praised be God that I was separated from you, and that I receive you once more. Both are the work of His fatherly care."

Such was the Bishop's greeting to his children. And content with these words, the people separated to their homes, and Björn and I prayed that those words might live in our hearts.

Yesterday morning, as Olympias was commending some of the people on her estates to my especial care, (Macarius, who was at first her almoner, being now more personally engaged about Chrysostom,) she was summoned to one of the palaces by a most urgent message. This evening, when I saw her again, her eyes were red with weeping, but there was a peculiar expression of subdued happiness on her face. It was the Lady Eulalia who had sent for her, and she had only just returned.

"Is the lady Agnes ill?" I asked.

"No," she replied with a bright smile, "thank God! I trust there is yet much work for her to do in this needy world."

And then she told me the history of those

two days, partly what she had seen, and partly from the description of the old nurse. In the morning of the day on which she was summoned, little Theodore, the only son of the family, after a long illness, had become suddenly worse. Eulalia, who had been cheated into a night's sleep by the assurance of the physicians that he was recovering, was called to his bed-side to see her boy in convulsions. She was not loved in the household, for she had no faith in affection, but now, every slave was touched by the sight of the mother's wild and hopeless anguish. All her pretty dreams and fancies about relics and sermons vanished; quivering like a straw in the grasp of the whirlwind; from a child playing at religion, she awoke to feel herself a woman, a mother, without God, and without hope. The old dark but real superstitions of her infancy returned on her, and she called on them to send for a sorceress. The old woman came and professed only to use Christian charms — "good words out of the book." And Eulalia sate breathless, watching her mysterious mutterings and signs. But, as she watched, the child became more convulsed,—a livid hue overspread his little suffering features; and then Eulalia threw herself on her knees beside the old woman, tore off her necklaces and jewels, and threw them at her feet, crying—"Will he live? oh, make him live! Have you no stronger spells than these?"

The old woman looked suspiciously at her, and muttered—"Some words are strong but they are forbidden now."

"Nothing is forbidden that can give life to my child," sobbed the mother. "Try anything—keep him here by any spell, if you know one!"

But at these words, the child Agnes, who had sate still watching her brother all through the night, rose, pale as death, and clasping her mother's hand, she said—"O mother! not any heathen words; no wicked words can call him back. The Bishop says we must not trust in charms—the Book says so—God says so. Only pray to Him! These wicked words have no power to do us good—but God has, and He is so good!"

Eulalia had tried at first to push the child away; but there was something in her earnest words and looks which seemed to speak from another world; and, half from exhaustion, half from a feeble glimmering of hope, she replied—

"If you know any such words, child, try them, and pray—I cannot."

"Shall I say the words I have been saying all night?" said the child, kneeling beside her brother's bed; and very softly, as if she only cared for God to hear her, she said—"O blessed Father which art in heaven, give my brother back to me, and make him well, because we love each other so very dearly; and I do not know how to

live without him, and because Thou lovest us both so much, and art so good! Oh hear me, blessed God, for Jesus' sake, and give him back to my mother and to me!"

The little boy's face became stiller at the sound of her voice, and when she ceased, he opened his eyes and stretched out his little hands to her, and murmured—

"Not that one, sister; pray that other prayer —my prayer, Agnes!"

The little girl began to cry, but seeing his troubled look she kept back her sobs as well as she could, and said, in a faltering voice—

"Blessed Jesus! who lovest little children, do love us, and forgive us! Make us good, and take us to-day in Thine arms and bless us, and let us live with Thee together always."

The boy lay still, the old woman had departed, and Eulalia pressed the weeping face of her little girl on her bosom. So they remained some time, when Agnes looked up, and said, timidly—

"May we not send for Olympias?"

"Who is Olympias?" Eulalia asked.

"The lady we met in the ship, who is so good to every one, and loves the sick and poor so much."

"What good could she do us?"

"She could speak to us, and read such blessed words, and pray for us, and for him," said the child.

"But we are not poor," said Eulalia, "perhaps she would not come."

"Jesus came to the rich ruler when his little girl was dying," repiied Agnes, "and I am sure Olympias would come."

So Olympias was sent for. But she could work no miracle; she could only weep with the mourning, as her Master did, and point them to Him. Yet before she left, God, through her words, worked a greater miracle than any on palsied limbs or dead bodies, even as He promised, saying—"Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father."

The little boy died—the darling of the household—died; but from the right hand of God, whither He went, Jesus shed, through His disciples lips, such a balm on the bereaved mother, that casting aside all her hollow pretences and vain hopes, by the bedside of her dead child for the first time she saw her God and Saviour, and blessed Him in her heart. The chilled, worldly nature awoke to love and weep; the soul dead in hypocrisies and sin, arose to newness of life; the heart from which God had taken its dearest treasure, was enabled to look to Him, to trust His love and thank Him amidst its anguish, and to recognize that there is One whose presence can make heaven, though His gifts be all withdrawn.

Thus, come what may, He is enthroned on His throne of grace, and His Book, and His

Church are left to reflect His blessed image here, such miracles can never cease. Oh, let our faith never lose sight of this! Gifts of healing may be substituted by medical science; gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues, by the laborious study of years; but while Christ lives, and His Church lives, and nature weaves her metamorphoses of life and death, the Spirit of God shall not cease to work these miracles of healing and blessing, causing love, and joy, and peace to spring up in barren hearts. And to this end, not angels, but disciples, believing men and women and children, shall be His ministers of grace. Let us watch and pray, and wait in hope; it is worth living in a world where such work is to be done.

Constantinople has returned to its everyday aspect,—the faithful nuns and deaconesses to their hospitals and refuges for the poor,—the court to its intrigues,—Chrysostom to his minis tries of warning, teaching, rebuking, encourag ing,—all equally with him ministries of love. The artisans and shopkeepers are as deep as ever in controversy, and pass as lightly as ever, as Chrysostom says, from the debates about the cut of a tunic to disputation on the mysteries of the Godhead, apparently equally impassioned about both.

Yesterday morning Olympias told me that a

young Roman lady, on orphan under the guardianship of the husband of Synesia, had asked to be allowed to help her in her work for the poor. This evening she passed out of Olympias' house as I was entering it. It was Marcella. I should have remembered her face anywhere, yet it was very much changed; its expression seemed softened, subdued and yet exalted. She is no longer in early youth. I should not have thought she would have recognised me, but she did. She is a Christian then! There is something very happy in the thought of being a fellow-labourer with her, though working altogether apart. Yet my purpose is one day to accompany Björn to the north: and whenever Chrysostom is not preaching, I find my way to the church he has opened in the city, with a service in their own language, for the Goths, and prepare myself for the future.

Chrysostom surely grows holier daily. Blessed it is, amidst all the confusion and corruption, to see God thus steadily leading His own to Himself. If, as he says, summer and winter, joy and sorrow alike prosper the seed,—yet both do not work with equal rapidity. Those few weeks of persecution, and few days of exile, seem to have lifted him years on the way of Christian life; so far, that I sometimes tremble whether he may not soon be taken beyond our sight and hearing.

He is so self-forgetful and loving; so fervent

in his discourses, so earnest in pointing us away from his words to the Bible;—proposing to us questions that we may find the solution *there*,—entreating us to collect, not gold, but Bibles,—to take the Bible in our hands and read its histories connectedly, holding fast what we understand, and reading what is difficult again and again. For he says—"Though Philip, who taught the Ethiopian in his chariot, is not here, the Spirit who sent Philip is here. To read the Bible is to hold converse with God; and God, who loves man, seeing us thirsting for that divine knowledge, will not suffer us to need the help of man, but will Himself speedily enlighten our understandings; and, according to His unsearchable wisdom, impart the truth in all its fulness to our souls."

Those words of his I cannot forget:—"Wait for no other teacher; thou hast the Word of God. Nothing can teach thee like this. Human teachers may withhold many things, from envy and vanity. Hear, I entreat you, all ye men of the world! Get Bibles, true medicine for your souls. If nothing else, at least the New Testament,—the Gospels, the Acts, the Apostolic Epistles;—let these be your teacher. If any misfortune befalls thee, look into thy Bible, as the magazine of all healing remedies; thence draw thy comfort in sorrow. Or rather, look not then *first* into the Bible, but carry it *always* in thy heart."

If the Bible, on which he leans, and the elaborate ceremonial and preaching which he upholds, were to come into open conflict, can we doubt on which side he would be? It has not yet come to that; but the system he sustains knows itself better than he knows it, and rejects him.

It is painful to see how Macarius and Olympias, and not these only, but all the pious and devoted clergy and laity, hang on his words—as on the words of one given back to them from the dead—they know not for how long!

The other day, when I looked round me for Björn, who had accompanied me to the church, I saw his eyes rivetted on the Bishop, and the tears flowing down his face. I could not wonder, for Chrysostom had been saying—"Say not; I am lost! what remains for me? I have sinned! what can I do?" Thou hast a Physician, who is master of thy disease—a Physician who heals by a look—a Physician who can make all right again—who can, and will. Thou canst not say how thou wast created, neither canst thou say *how* thou art cleansed from sin; for as the fire kindled among thorns consumes them, much more does the will of God consume our sins—uproots them, and makes the sinner like Him who never sinned. Question not, speculate not, but believe in this miracle. Did the sinner who washed His feet offer nothing but tears? Nothing but tears, and repentance. She took repentance for her intercessor, and went straight to

the Fountain. And the woman of Canaan. 'Have mercy on me!' she says; 'I have no merit in my life—my life gives me no confidence; to mercy I fly for refuge—thither where judgment is not, where salvation is not refused.' She does not call on the Apostle James; she does not entreat John; she does not come to Peter, but she goes straight through the whole company, 'I need no mediator; I take repentance for my intercessor—I go to the Fountain. For this did He descend; for this He took our human nature, that I might be able to speak to Him.' Above the cherubim tremble before Him; and here below a sinful woman speaks with Him. 'Have mercy on me!' A mere word; but it finds an immeasurable ocean of grace. 'Have mercy on me! For this Thou camest; for this Thou hast become what I am.' Above, tremb ling awe; here, joyful access!"

And these joyful tidings, poured out so freely from the lips of the Bishop, presbyters and deacons, deaconesses, consecrated maidens, believing mothers, and little children like Agnes, gather each in a separate vessel, and convey hither and thither, into country villages, or city workshops, among busy homes of labour, in courtly halls of state, by lonely sick-beds; and so a living church of living souls is gathered—not to Chrysostom, but to Christ; that hereafter they that reap, and they that sow, and He that giveth life, may rejoice together.

LETTER XII.

A FEW weeks since, as Marcella and I were alone, in Olympias' entrance-hall, I ventured to ask her what led her to become a Christian.

"The grace of God," she said, "and your Gospel, and many sorrows."

"Thank God!" said I; "I prayed often for you."

She did not make any reply; and looking up, I saw tears in her eyes.

"Have you known much sorrow?"

"I was motherless from infancy," she said; "and for many years now I have been fatherless; and the world has sorrow enough for such; and," she added, with a smile, "Christ has trials for those He leads."

"But they are all blessings," I said; "helps, not hindrances on the way."

"All," she replied; and we said no more.

That evening I asked Olympias if Marcella had any especial sorrow at present.

"Her guardian, Synesia's husband, has, I believe, robbed her of most of her property, having obtained from the Emperor a grant of it, on some plea or other; and the life she leads in

that house is probably, very hard. I have heard, indeed, from others—though never from her —that they treat her more like a slave than a relation; that she is kept at embroidery, until her health has nearly failed; and the time she can spare for the works of love she delights in, is only on Sundays, and on the great holidays."

"Why does she not enter one of the houses of the nuns?" I asked.

"I believe she promised her father on his death-bed, never to do so," was the reply.

A purpose sprang up instantly in my heart that I could not tell Olympias. The purpose was sudden,—but the feeling was no new one. I went home and told Björn what I had heard, and asked him whether he thought we could make a home fit for the Lady Marcella, if she would accept it.

"A monk, and a nun, and an old Goth," he remarked, "would make a queer household!"

"I am not a monk," said I, "and never will be."

"Thank heaven," said Björn; "that alters the case."

"I can do many things that earn bread among the hills," said I; "and here I could at least transcribe manuscripts. She is used to different circumstances; but gold does not make happiness."

"I have a hoard of gold I laid up for him that's gone," said the Goth.

I thanked him, but said that if she would ac-

cept my help, there was no need for her to depend on any one else.

"More Gothic than humble!" said Björn.

"But there is our mission in the North," I remarked, "to keep our gold for," and he was pacified.

I could not say a word to any of my friends on this subject. Marriage was in their eyes, I knew, though permitted, yet a fall, and an entering on a scene of lower duties and more manifold temptations. To me this purpose was sacred and blessed as any I had ever dreamed of; and if God gave me to bind that precious life to mine, I knew that not only would joy be deepened and sorrow softened, but both would be hallowed, and life would become enriched in all holy services. There was but One, therefore, to whom I could speak of this;—and it was well.

That very day I discovered what I could earn with my pen; and, finding it would be sufficient, I went to the house of Synesia, and told Marcella all.

She had recognised me that day in Rome, when I thought she passed me by; and all these years God had been training us apart for each other! Well may Chrysostom say, there is not only a Providence, but a Providence of love—an inexpressible love—a love indeed, unfeigned, most fervent, inextinguishable; and it is this which has led and bound us together.

I cannot say I entered with much pleasure on the task of communicating the tidings to Olympias. But though at first she looked disappointed, she only said, very gently—"May God bless you both! I did not choose a solitary life myself, you know; and in what God has chosen for us, there is no merit;—and also," she added brightly, "less of fear. I trust He has appointed this for you."

Macarius could not get beyond,—

"Well, such shall have trouble in the flesh! But all passes so quickly here, it is perhaps of little moment, if you watch and pray."

Chrysostom had a gracious word and a blessing for us—"Purity belongs not only to monks;—the laws of Christ are alike for all. The greatest things are love and gentleness,—far greater than celibacy. Neither age, nor poverty, nor riches, nor any circumstance, can hinder a man if the will be steadfast and the heart right. If marriage hinder you, the fault is not in marriage, but in you. It is faith that sanctifies;—every believer is a saint. Christ gave His marriage gift at Cana. You may be helpers of one another's joy."

And he himself gave us the marriage benediction, and spoke to us afterwards words which we bind around our hearts.

"Every house, consisting of a husband and wife, is a church. Think it no hindrance that you are there alone, for 'where two or three are

gathered in My name,' saith the Lord, 'there am I in the midst of them.' Where Christ is, there is a great church; where Christ is, all the angels are. Ye are not alone, since the Lord of all abides with you."

Marcella made great revolutions at our fireside—Björn's and mine—though we thought every thing was arranged so perfectly to welcome her. He laughs at her attempts to pronounce his heathenish name; so that now she commonly gives the translation, and "the Bear" and we make the happiest household in Constantinople.

But in what a sea of storm and clouds our patch of blue sky seems set! Sad, indeed, it would be, did we not know that the clouds, massive as they seem, are passing shades, and the light, not the cloud,—the joy, not the sorrow—is what endureth, because God is love, and love is heaven.

LETTER XIV.

THE waves rage high again around Chrysostom, our beloved friend, our teacher, our bishop. There are so many accounts of these last transactions, that between those who twist accusation out of his every word, those who see no fault in him, and those who love him all the more for that honest, fearless, impetuous opposition to wrong which certainly forms part of his natural character, it is very difficult to know what is true.

Briefly, the principal circumstances are these:—The Emperor has had a magnificent silver statue of the Empress erected in front of the hall of justice as of a goddess. This, as usual, was installed with dances and dramatic entertainments, and ceremonies adulatory to idolatry. In vain the Bishop protested; the tumultuous festival proceeded, and the hollow, noisy, unholy rejoicings could be heard in his church, which is near.

Soon after this, the feast of John the Baptist occurred; and if Chrysostom began his sermon with the words, "Again Herodias raves, again

she dances, again she demands the head of John," it is, perhaps, no wonder that the guilty conscience of the Empress applied them to herself, and made them a pretext for the cruel and base persecution she must have long been planning. However this may be, they have found a council of bishops servile and unchristian enough to condemn him. All peace is over for the Bishop, and for the Church of Constantinople. Chrysostom still remains, indeed, among us; but his voice is silenced, and to us the episcopal residence where he is imprisoned is little better than a tomb. To him, how far worse! since from it he issues, not to the heavenly country, and to the Church above, and to the Lamb slain for us, but to banishment and disgrace. Chrysostom is still among us, but only to see indignities and sufferings heaped on his faithful friends, which he cannot lighten,—only that we may know that he prays for us.

Meanwhile, torture and death are sifting and diminishing this church,—scattering the chaff, and gathering the grain into the garner. In vain the faithful bishop, Paul of Cratia, petitioned the Empress, that—if only until the Easter festival—the church might be spared, and the newly baptized be allowed to enjoy those sacred days in peace. At nine o'clock on Easter Eve, when all the churches were illuminated, and the multitudes thronged into them to praise God in song or in silence for the unspeak-

able love of which this season speaks, and three thousand candidates for baptism awaited the moment to confess their Saviour and receive His blessing,—the Thracian soldiers rushed at once into all the crowded churches, and dispersed the joyful assemblies there,—the youthful candidates, with the parents and relations who had met to see and welcome them, catechumens and communicants,—with blows and bloodshed, till in the darkened churches none were left but the dead and the dying; and in the city this Easter has been celebrated with mourning and bitter tears in many a home.

Twice again the Church attempted to assemble for the worship of God,—once in the hall of some baths within the city, once again in an abandoned amphitheatre without the walls, used in the days of Constantine. Both times they were dispersed with violence, the sacred quiet of the assemblies was broken in on by the wild cries of the Thracians, and the clash of their arms,—and the place of meeting transformed into a battle-field, or rather into a slaughter-house. We were present at the last, and saw the amphitheatre, glistening with the white robes of the candidates for baptism, and resounding with solemn Christian chants, desecrated in a few minutes into a scene of blood and lamentation,—the unarmed multitude being given up by the Emperor to be massacred by barbarians.

We reached our home in safety, but we can

only long for the Bishop to be delivered from the anguish all this must cause him. Assassins have more than once attacked him in his house, and the other day his intercessions saved one of these from death. But this show of justice is, we know, hollow indeed, and the hatred the court bears towards him real and intense. One could almost wish for him another issue than banishment, yet if life remains, so many storms pass, so many weary nights are watched through at last!

The other night I found Björn pacing up and down at midnight outside the house.

"I am waiting for another earthquake!" he said; "but I suppose it can hardly come before *he* is safely away."

Perhaps, however, the fine gold is prepared by this time for further refining, and the crown and victory to reward the end of this trial may be for Chrysostom better and more enduring than the last,—to be bestowed at the resurrection of the just. Yet why not hope for a nearer triumph? The heart of the people is true to him, the true instinct of the struggling, labouring, suffering poor, has found out the true man, and will not desert him; and we know he holds the bond which binds him to his church sacred as that of marriage. He says, whom God has joined, man cannot put asunder, and nothing but force can tear him from the people to whom the Saviour his God united him. If, then, the

people is firm, and the Bishop is sure to be firm, why should we not hope that the intrigues of a court and the anger of a haughty woman may yet be overcome?

Chrysostom is gone from us!—all hope is over! The people crowded the church of St. Sophia, which he had entered in order to meet his faithful clergy there; they thronged the streets around the great door where his servants were in attendance with the mule he always rode. But the time passed on; the servants and the mule still waited. The crowd grew impatient, watching every movement within the church; still the Bishop did not come. At length we heard that, knowing force would be used to arrest him, and anxious to save bloodshed, he had withdrawn by another door, and silently yielded himself up to the imperial officers.

How could I say it was better he should go? Was not the very sight of the house where he lived and prayed, and praised God, like a glimpse of the gates of heaven? Was not the very thought that that generous, fearless heart still beat among us, a link to God? Could we not still have access to him in private, and hear his noble self-forgetful words of faith and love? And now, the poor have lost their counsellor, the oppresssed their advocate, the fatherless their friend — we are all orphaned. And yet

how he would reprove my words! One is our Father, even God.

Olympias cannot speak of him. Her own sufferings, on account of her adherence to his cause, have been many and great. She has known much sorrow; the natural buoyancy which was in her is long since crushed, and as yet the sure hope she has laid up in the heavens only enables her to lift her eyes thither, but not to look on earth with composure. Meantime, she is more active than ever, receiving into her house those who were wounded on Easter Eve, and visiting others in prison. It was not from her that I heard of the Bishop's leave-taking.

When he met his faithful clergy, for the last time, in the church of St. Sophia, he knelt with them and prayed, saying—

"Let us take leave of the angel of this church."

Then withdrawing with them into the sacrarium, he embraced some of the bishops with tears, and took a touching farewell of every one. After this, he said they might wait for a little while; he would retire to refresh himself. So he went into the baptistry. There he sent for the deaconesses, and those faithful and devoted women, who, with their money and sympathy, and personal labour, had been ever ready so generously to help in his missions, hospitals, and all his works of love. He said to them—

"Come, my daughters, and listen to me. My

end, I see, is near. I have finished my course, and, perhaps, you will not see me more. I earnestly exhort you to this:—Let none of you slacken in your wonted labours of love for the Church; and if any one, without intrigue, is unanimously chosen to be bishop after me, follow him as you have followed me; for the Church must not remain without a bishop. I commend you to the mercy of God. Remember me in your prayers.

He did not return to the clergy; but suffered himself quietly to be led away by the police and soldiers; and in a small ferry-boat, without one word of parting, or one faithful friend, among all the thousands who so loved him, watching his departure, he left the shores of Constantinople, and crossed into Asia. Thus, he thought, tumult and bloodshed would be avoided; and what were a few proofs of devotion and love, more or less, to one Christ and His angels shall so soon welcome? But for us it is bitter, indeed, and the sorrow that rent his heart God only knows.

LETTER XV.

DEEP and real is the work God gave Chrysostom to do. The Church still cleaves faithfully together, and to God, though all the sacred buildings are closed to us, and the faithful clergy silenced. We meet here and there in small bands, and strive to edify one another, as he told us, reading the Scriptures, and praying, and singing together the church hymns he taught us so to love. Many, also, who formerly frequented the theatres and the circus, have been drawn to us in these times of trial; and those who scarcely entered the churches before, now assemble in private houses, or among the hills around. His exhortations are remembered. Not one work of love slackens, not one Christian institution fails; not one mission among the poor of the city, or the villages, or the more distant heathen, has fallen to the ground, lest men should say it was Bishop John for whose sake these things were done, and not his Master. Chrysostom built the Church, not on himself, but on the rock; and it stands, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The rage of the enemies increases. There was a fire lately in the church of St. Sophia, and the heathen prefect has made this a pretext for torturing and imprisoning all he can of the "Johannites," as they call the faithful in Constantinople. Macarius was amongst those who bore the rack without its eliciting a word from him but testimony to Chrysostom's worth, and praise to God. Björn visited him in prison, and was very silent all the day after. In the evening he confessed to Marcella that there was a courage greater than that required on the battlefield, and that even a monk might be as brave as a soldier.

Björn's acquaintance among the soldiers gives him advantages which he eagerly uses, taking all the help and comfort he can to the prisoners in the way of food, and balm for their racked limbs. In words he is not rich, but those he has are strong, and I have no doubt do as much good as the bodily aid he brings. Besides, the child Agnes is frequently his companion, and the old soldier, with the child, and their Book, are ministers of grace to make any prison shine. Then we often receive letters from our Bishop, so that we are not without comfort—that is, Olympias and Synkletia, and the deaconesses Karteria and Theodora, and other friends of his, hear from him, and we receive the comfort through them. The first was from Nicæa to Olympias, and he wrote—"The more my trials increase, the more

my comfort increases. I have better hopes for the future, and hitherto all goes well with me; I sail with a fair wind. Who has heard or seen such things? Sandbanks and cliffs, whirlpools and tempests, dark nights and thick fog!—and yet, on such a sea, I find myself as well as those who rest in the haven. Be assured of this. Raise yourself, also, above these troubles and storms. I am well and joyful. Only one thing troubles me—not to be able to trust that you also are happy." He said also that the soldiers who attended him, treated him as affectionately as his own servants. So he wins the hearts of all who come near him. We know not yet his place of exile, nor does he. But his great anxiety seems to be, that the missions and works of love he commenced should not languish. It is for the Church only he fears. For this he writes letters in the midst of fatigue, and travel, and sickness, —not only to us, but to Antioch, and every place where he thinks there is need of encouragement or stimulus. He is not satisfied with generalities, but entreats for the most minute accounts of all these works,—what new churches are founded, what pious missionaries are sent forth to labour amongs them; and has besought Olympias not to cease aiding Bishop Maruthas in his labours for the heathen of Persia, because the good man was misled to condemn him in the council of Chalcedon. He finds time to thank any who aid in this his Master's work as for the

dearest personal favour,—one for providing a church with wine and oil, another for helping the fatherless, another for witnessing to the truth; and whilst his heart takes this wide range in the vineyard of Christ, he has the tenderest words of sympathy to spare for any who suffer and are persecuted. Marcella notices that in his letters to Olympias he passes more lightly than in any others over his own privations and sufferings, though, in all, he cannot allude to a trial without dwelling on the surpassing grace of God, which makes it easy for him.

His place of exile is at length fixed, by the refinement of malice, as far on the limits of Christendom and civilization as they dare banish him —in the mountain town of Kukusus, between Armenia Isauria and Cilicia, where the mountains are infested by robber tribes; but they cannot banish him from the sight of God and the hearts of men. Once only he wrote in a strain of something like reproach to the deaconess Theodora, that she, with so many powerful friends, could not have obtained for him a place of exile as mild as the worst criminals were sentenced to,—not even the little grace of resting his wearied body where it might be safe from the attacks of Isaurian banditti! "Yet," he added, "praised be God even for this." And to Olympias, shortly after, he wrote on the same subject—"Trouble no one any more about chang-

ing my place of exile. It is already as well as if the favour had been granted—for, probably, my friends have tried to obtain it, but could not succeed." It was the momentary doubt whether his friends had forgotten him—one of those cruel doubts which will chill the heart in the silence of long separation, which had disturbed him, not the desolation of his place of exile. "And," he added, "blessed be God for all; for I will not cease, whatever happens to me, to say this."

His next halting-place was Cæsarea, the chief city of Cappadocia. We have heard from him thence, though he was too much exhausted with fatigue and fever to be able to speak to the messengers Theodora sent to inquire for him. His age is little more than fifty; but those early fastings and voluntary privations, which he never recommended to any beside, and still more his ceaseless labours, his intense thought, the wear of sympathy with others, and care for the churches, partings, wrongs, contest, and above all, the fervent energy of his nature, have worn down his frame, and he is old in all but the freshness of a heart which will never be chilled. They have not allowed one of his household or friends to accompany him; and hard and scanty food, with mountain journeys in the burning heat of the day, so overcame him, that he reached Cæsarea in the height of a violent fever. Here he had hoped for rest,—we had been told and believed the bishop would receive him as a

brother; but envy, or fear of the court, or dread of compromising his orthodoxy, steeled the heart of Bishop Pharetrius against him, and instead of an hospitable welcome and friendly care, he found no place of refuge in his sickness but a house in the outskirts of the town.

Yet why should I brood over this? We all dwell on it (I believe) the more, because he does not. He confessed, indeed, in a letter to Theodora, that he had suffered more than those condemned to the mines, and reached Cæsarea more dead than alive. But in general it is only from messengers or passing travellers we hear of the privations and sufferings, the cold receptions and base contumelies heaped on the venerable head the court has disgraced. From him we hear of caravans of travellers from various parts standing still when they hear his name, and expressing their heartfelt sympathy with him; of hundreds of men and women, monks and nuns, coming to meet him, and weeping over his sufferings.

"This is no small comfort," he wrote to Olympias, "when we think how bitter the contrary was to the holy Singer, when he said—'I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.'"

It is the bishops and the higher clergy, who, in their Pharisaical pride, or courtly servility, are his enemies. His health is recruiting wonderfully at Cæsarea; the rest, fresh air, and

above all the love and sympathy he finds there, have so benefited him; and were it not for the jealousy of Bishop Pharetrius, who has excited the wild and ignorant monks of the district against him as a heretic, he might have found it a haven of peace. But this, I fear, exists not on earth for Chrysostom.

It seems comfort, in the midst of the enmity of these Oriental bishops, to hear how warmly the Western Churches feel the injustice which has been done our bishop. Honorius, the Emperor's brother, has interceded for him most earnestly.

Innocent, Bishop of Rome, has sent messengers to demand a general council, disdainfully refusing the name of council to the faction who met at Chalcedon. But as far as we can see, these generous efforts on thh behalf have only enraged his enemies, and excited the jealousy of the court still further.

Chrysostom has been driven from his second refuge; the bishop and the monks (for we are sure these half-savage monks are but his tools) made it impossible for him to live at Cæsarea; and, after chasing him from the town to a country house, so threatened his life there, that he was obliged to fly by torchlight across the mountains. And so, after a dangerous journey along the almost pathless precipices, obliged to travel by night, for fear of the Isaurian robbers,

his mule stumbling in the dark on the rocky mountain sides,—weary, alone, and ill, he reached Kukusus, his distant place of exile.

Yet on his arrival he wrote to one in Cæsarea who had shewn him much love—"I have accomplished the desolate, insecure, and dangerous journey without fear or discomfort."

In truth, God, in whose hands are the hearts of all, seems wonderfully to have prepared him a home in the wilderness. A rich proprietor sent some of his slaves to Cæsarea on purpose to entreat Chrysostom to make no house but his in Kukusus his home, and has furnished it with every comfort; so that the Bishop, who needs so little for himself, has had to restrain his generosity. Some of his friends in Constantinople have lands there, and have entreated him to use all belonging to them as his own. And the Bishop of Kukusus shews him all imaginable kindness and reverence, and would gladly share the episcopal authority with him, would he accept it. His health, moreover, seems improving in the mountain air, so that we begin to be full of hope once more.

He writes also to Olympias to comfort her under the trials some are enduring here, telling her to believe, as he has ever told her, that "there is but one really sorrowful thing, and that is sin." And of his own state, entreating her not to trouble any to seek change for him. He says, "What more can I find than I have

here? Rest, peace, freedom from care, health of body. If I can judge by what I feel now, the soft air of the East seems to breathe on me, and is not less refreshing than at Antioch."

Perhaps, then, we say to each other, he has after all only been sent away from us a little while, to train us to trust more immediately in God, and to recruit him for longer service amongst us.

Meanwhile, Kukusus must be a happy place. Constantine, a presbyter of Antioch, who had fled thither from the persecutions at Antioch, wrote thus to his mother about him—"Intercourse with the holy bishop has so refreshed me, that I am become well-nigh another man, and can scarcely feel I am in a strange place. Such a fulness of good things surrounds me—such spiritual riches fill my soul, that I cannot cease continually to praise God for this!"

Persecution, however, continues and spreads among all the Oriental Churches on his account. The court inflicts severe penalties on all who refuse to acknowledge the worthless Arsacius whom they have intruded into his place.

But Chrysostom seems sent to his mountain apart to pray like his Lord, and to speak the words of hope and courage to all who suffer or toil on the waves of this stormy world. To Olympias he writes—"I think of the Ruler of the universe, who controls all tempests, not by skill, but by a look. If at first He calms not the

storm, this is His way,—not at once to take away the evil, but when it increases, and is come to the full, and men begin to despair, then He works His miracles,—thus proving His almighty power, and exercising the patience of those who suffer." Examples from Holy Writ of sufferers and conquerors dear to Christ fill his mind. And ever the two key-words in all he writes seem—"There is but one thing to fear—sin against God:" and "In everything give thanks."

The brief sunshine is past. Chrysostom's trials have again commenced. Sickness, the sudden and violent changes of the climate, and the mountainous region, are fast wearing him away from us; and, besides this, Kukusus is no longer a safe retreat for any one. The Isaurian robbers make the neighbourhood so dangerous that the city is abandoned for the clefts of the rocks. In the icy night, people are startled from their houses; and many escape the bandits, only to die of cold. Famine and infectious diseases are wasting the helpless little band that have taken refuge with Chrysostom in the fortress of Arabissum; and, in the midst of all this, his care for others,—for churches and individuals, never slackens. Those who reach Chrysostom find intercourse with him more refreshing than anything. He writes to entreat Olympias to consult a physician, and care for her health. He dwells in spirit with patriarchs, apostles, and

martyrs,—with the three children in the furnace,—with Job and Isaiah and Paul,—or rather with Christ, the strength of all. He dwells with these! what wonder, then, that he dwells in peace, and that his words are like those of the angels who shone in the night on the shepherds, and sang?

The last blow of hatred has been given,—the last service of earthly love rendered to Chrysostom. Lately his letters have reached us irregularly; the lives of the messengers were endangered by the Isaurian robbers, and he entreated us not to imperil any on his account. But his enemies could not endure that the heart which beat only for Christ and the Church, should be bound by one link of intercourse to the Churches who so loved him. They sentenced him to a yet further exile in the town of Pityus, beyond Colchis, on the eastern shores of the Black Sea. There they thought no tidings would reach him, and his voice never more be heard in the church for which he lived.

But whilst they were exiling him from Christendom, God had prepared to call him to heaven,—to the country he longed for, and the Lord he had served.

One more hard journey for Chrysostom across mountain and wilderness. It was the last; and its end to him was not that town amidst the deserts, but the bosom of his God. He never reached his place of exile. Weak and weary, he

came to the city of Komana in Pontus, and there they made him rest for the night in a church just beyond the walls, where lay the bones of the martyr Basiliskus. In the night he saw the martyr, in a dream, who said to him :— "Be of good cheer, brother ; to-morrow we shall be together."

In the morning, he prayed his escort to allow him to wait till eleven before he set out again. One of the soldiers who guarded him was tender to him as a woman, but the other was rough and harsh, and had the imperial orders on his side. So they dragged the sick man on. But a decree, more irresistible than the Emperor's, was on its way for him. After bringing him a weary mile on his journey, he became so ill that they were compelled to carry him back to the church where the martyr lay. In perfect consciousness, and full of gladness, he saw his departure drawing nigh. He changed his dress, as if preparing for a festival, and distributing the rest of his wardrobe among those around him, he calmly received the Holy Supper. Then, with a prayer, and one more joyful utterance of those words which were so dear to him, "Praised be God for all things!" his spirit entered on the joy we know not,—dearly purchased for him, and for us! And from those unseen dwellings of redeemed and perfected spirits we still hear those words echoing down to us unchanged among the songs of angels,—

though no more indeed in the tone of patient faith, but in that of victorious, rapturous fulfilment—"Glory be to God for all!"

And now, without a delusion or a sin between his eyes and the Light he loved—forgiven—redeemed, he casts at the feet of Jesus the crown purchased for him by His precious blood.

Earthquakes and tempests are indeed thick around us. The Empress Eudoxia died before Chrysostom; the city has been shaken to its foundations; and Björn looks on with grim delight, (whilst doing all in his power to help the sufferers,) and says—"They may come thick now, for the Bishop is safe beyond them all." His feet are indeed in the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

But the Emperor, terrified by these convulsions, sent a deputation to Nilus, the holy monk, who has retired from the prefecture of Constantinople, wearied by the corruptions of the court and city, and lives among the mountains of Sinai. Björn is well-nigh reconciled to the whole monastic order, for the sake of the answer Nilus has sent—

"How can you seek that Constantinople should be delivered from frequent earthquakes and fire from heaven, when thousandfold crimes have been committed there, and evil rules there;—when the pillar of the Church, the light of truth, the messenger of Christ, Bishop John, has been banished hence!"

LETTER XVI.

CHRYSOSTOM is gone, but his works cannot perish,—at least, as far as he was a fellow-worker with God; all else will crumble into dust, or be burned with fire. And patiently and hopefully those he guided in the service of Christ, Olympias, and the deaconesses, and the faithful church, labor on until they shall join him. It is night indeed, and the heavenly city has yet to descend on earth; but those who have seen one reflect the image of Christ as Chrysostom did, amid all the storms,—and gazing continually on Him become transformed unto His likeness and beam forth His love on all,—may no longer despair. We have seen how possible it is for the children of the day to sing and work amidst the darkness, dwelling by faith in the light of the unrisen sun; and joyfully will we seek to follow in his footsteps, or rather in those of his Master. Björn, Marcella, and I, go forth to bear the message of the love of God amongst the barbarians of the North. We are on our way, mother, back to thee. With us, we take these words of John Chrysostom, written

amidst his sufferings at Kukusus, and spoken to us as from the tomb or from heaven :—

"There is not only a Providence, but a Providence of love, an unutterable love, a love, indeed, unfeigned, most fervent, and inextinguishable. When the Holy Scriptures would describe it to us, they use images taken from human things, but they use these not to make our spirits rest on them, but to carry them beyond; not as if these images could express the love of God, but because they are taken from things well-known to us. To those who mourned and said the Lord has forgotten us, the prophet says —'Can a woman forget her child?' He would say, 'As the mother cannot forget her child, so cannot God forget men.' But that you may know that this image is not meant to limit the love of God, but is used because it is the largest measure we know, and the love of God exceeds it infinitely, he adds — 'yea, *they may forget*, yet will I not forget thee.' And again the prophet—'As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.' But the Lord of prophets, and of all, would shew us that the difference between the loving-kindness of God and the fatherly love of man, is no less than that between light and darkness, good and evil; for He says, 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him?' The measure of nature

is too narrow—he leaves it behind and uses other images. It is ever so with those who love; they cannot invent ways manifold enough to say how they love! Thus, the Lord makes use of the image of distance or space—'As far as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy to them that fear Him.' 'As far as the east is from the west, so far has He put our transgressions from us.' Who will not wonder at the inexpressible love of God, when he thinks that God gave His only-begotten Son to death, the shameful death of the meanest criminal; and all this He suffered for thy sake, and from care for thee, that the tyranny of sin might be destroyed, the sting of death taken away, the curse removed, the door of heaven opened to us! And even this was not enough; He ascended unto heaven and bestowed on thee the inexpressible grace of the Holy Ghost. Dive no further; but know assuredly that thou hast a Lord who loves thee with more than a father's and a mother's love—who seeks His own repose in thy salvation. For unutterable beyond all images is God's providence, incomprehensible His greatness, unspeakable His goodness, unfathomable His love."

Then speaking of trial, he asks—

"If we patiently await the issue of the uncertain remedies of the physician, should we not confidently wait for the certain results of the unfailing wisdom of God in afflicting us? If an

inexperienced man saw how the goldsmith first smelts the gold, and covers it with ashes, he might, not waiting for the end, deem the gold lost. If one born and bred on the sea, without ever having heard of husbandry, came on land, and saw the corn previously kept under lock and bar, and guarded from all moisture, suddenly taken out by the husbandman, thrown about, and not only not preserved from moisture, but covered with soil, without any one watching by it, would he not deem the corn lost, and condemn the husbandman?"

And again, alluding to the sufferings of his beloved church at Constantinople, he writes—

"Is it a small thing that the Church should gain so noble a company of martyrs? For not only those who suffer for refusing to sacrifice are martyrs, but all who are willing to endure affliction for a cause well-pleasing to God. When thou seest the Church win so many treasures,—those, before sunk in sloth, animated with fervent zeal,—those who frequented the theatres, fleeing to the deserts,—valleys and mountains becoming by them transformed into churches,—the flocks gathering themselves without their shepherds for the fervent and orderly worship of God,—dost not thou wonder and admire to see how much good has sprung out of this evil? Not only those who led before a pious life, but also many of those who were passionately devoted to the theatre and the circus were seized with fer-

vent zeal, and freed from the bondage of passion, spoke boldly before tyrants, despised trials and sufferings, shewed that the most degraded of men may repent and be converted and exalted to heaven. Canst thou, then, be troubled by these things, seeing so many crowns of victory awarded, so much brought forth for our instruction? But, sayest thou, I grieve for the sake of those who have been drawn back to the world? I answer again, it is not affliction which has ruined them, but themselves. I will add yet another gain from these sufferings. How many who wore the mask of piety—how many who seemed to be something great, and were not—have suddenly, in these times, been revealed as they are! Thus have these times become a smelting furnace, separating the alloy from the gold, and causing the noble metal to shine yet more nobly."

These words shall stay us on our journey to thee, mother, and on the journey of life—these and the inexhaustible spring from which those living words flowed. Often as the day declines, we—Björn, Marcella, and I—kneel down together, and say the prayer of Chrysostom:—"Almighty God, who hast given us grace with one accord to make our common supplications unto Thee: and dost promise that where two or three are gathered together in Thy name, Thou wilt grant their requests: fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of Thy servants as may be most ex

pedient for them, granting us in this world the knowledge of the truth, and in the world to come life everlasting." And so we,—the two or three who form that Church where Christ is,—rest in peace, or go on our way rejoicing; for as Chrysostom said, "there is nothing terrible but sin." "The present is a pilgrimage—beyond is our father-land;" and therefore, when we meet in the old mountain home, and how much more when we meet where Chrysostom and all the blessed are, shall we not say—"Praised be God for all!"

We went out of our way into the further parts of Gaul, to glean some tidings of Vigilantius, and, if possible, to have some intercourse with him. We never succeeded in meeting him. We found traces, however, of his presence in the distribution of many Bibles, copied at his expense, among the villages in the south of Gaul; and despised and detested as his name is, I believe, when the books are opened, we shall find his labours in Christ fill a larger space in God's imperishable records than many the world and even the Church look admiringly on now. The miracles of Moses have little memorial among the chronicles of Egypt.

Thus, if I return to thee awakened from my vision of a Kingdom of God manifestly established on earth, I return equally delivered from the first bitter disappointment which succeeded it. If I cannot deem that to be the glorious City of

God where Eudoxia and Arcadius reigned, yet can I humbly rejoice to be a fellow-pilgrim in the wilderness, a fellow-labourer in the harvest-field, a fellow-voyager in the same tempest-tossed bark with Augustine, Chrysostom, Olympias, Vigilantius, and the thousand others of whom these are assuredly but types, the golden grains scattered over the surface to indicate the hidden treasures beneath; for besides one Elijah, whose name we know, were seven thousand whose names we know not, and he knew not, but only God, Who has written them in His Book of Life.

THE END.

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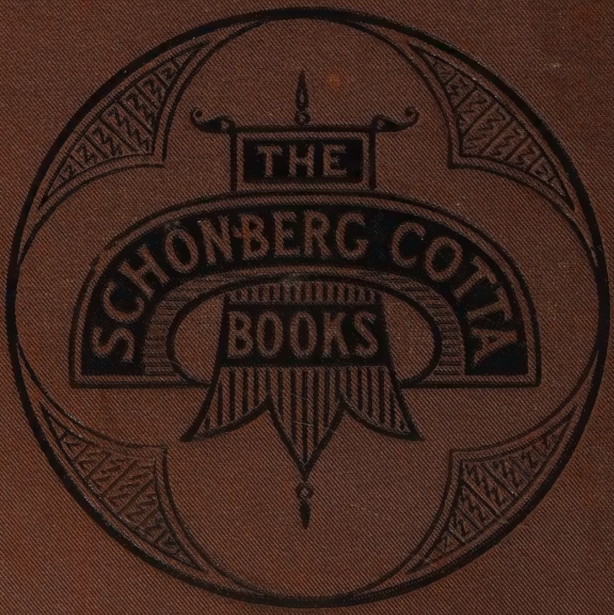
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